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LEO STRAUSS

A SEMINAR ON PLATO'S *PROTAGORAS*

A course offered in the spring quarter, 1965

Department of Political Science, The University of Chicago

Edited and with an introduction by Robert C. Bartlett

With assistance from David Kaye and Haidee Kowal

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Note on the Leo Strauss Transcript Project

Leo Strauss is well known as a thinker and writer, but he also had tremendous impact as a teacher. In the transcripts of his courses one can see Strauss commenting on texts, including many he wrote little or nothing about, and responding generously to student questions and objections. The transcripts, amounting to more than twice the volume of Strauss's published work, will add immensely to the material available to scholars and students of Strauss's work.

In the early 1950s mimeographed typescripts of student notes of Strauss's courses were distributed among his students. In winter 1954, the first recording, of his course on natural right, was transcribed and distributed to students. Strauss's colleague Herbert J. Storing obtained a grant from the Relm Foundation to support the taping and transcription, which resumed on a regular basis in the winter of 1956 with Strauss's course "Historicism and Modern Relativism." Of the 39 courses Strauss taught at the University of Chicago from 1958 until his departure in 1968, 34 were recorded and transcribed. After he retired from Chicago, recording of his courses continued at Claremont Men's College in the spring of 1968 and the fall and spring of 1969 (although the tapes for his last two courses there have not been located), and at St. John's College for the four years until his death in October 1973.

The surviving original audio recordings vary widely in quality and completeness, and after they had been transcribed, the audiotapes were sometimes reused, leaving the audio record very incomplete. Over time the audiotape deteriorated. Beginning in the late 1990s, Stephen Gregory, then administrator of the University's John M. Olin Center for Inquiry into the Theory and Practice of Democracy funded by the John M. Olin Foundation, initiated the digital remastering of the surviving tapes by Craig Harding of September Media to ensure their preservation, improve their audibility, and make possible their eventual publication. This remastering received financial support from the Olin Center and from the Division of Preservation and Access of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The surviving audiofiles are available at the Strauss Center website: https://leostrausscenter.uchicago.edu/courses.

Strauss permitted the taping and transcribing to go forward but did not check the transcripts or otherwise participate in the project. Accordingly, Strauss's close associate and colleague Joseph Cropsey originally put the copyright in his own name, though he assigned copyright to the Estate of Leo Strauss in 2008. Beginning in 1958 a headnote was placed at the beginning of each transcript: "This transcription is a written record of essentially oral material, much of which developed spontaneously in the classroom and none of which was prepared with publication in mind. The transcription is made available to a limited number of interested persons, with the understanding that no use will be made of it that is inconsistent with the private and partly informal origin of the material. Recipients are emphatically requested not to seek to increase the circulation of the transcription. This transcription has not been checked, seen, or passed on by the lecturer." In 2008, Strauss's heir, his daughter Jenny Strauss, asked Nathan Tarcov to succeed

Joseph Cropsey as Strauss's literary executor. They agreed that because of the widespread circulation of the old, often inaccurate and incomplete transcripts and the continuing interest in Strauss's thought and teaching, it would be a service to interested scholars and students to proceed with publication of the remastered audiofiles and transcripts. They were encouraged by the fact that Strauss himself signed a contract with Bantam Books to publish four of the transcripts although in the end none were published.

The University's Leo Strauss Center, established in 2008, launched a project, presided over by its director, Nathan Tarcov, and managed by Stephen Gregory, to correct the old transcripts on the basis of the remastered audiofiles as they became available, transcribe those audiofiles not previously transcribed, and annotate and edit for readability all the transcripts including those for which no audiofiles survived. This project was supported by grants from the Winiarski Family Foundation, Mr. Richard S. Shiffrin and Mrs. Barbara Z. Schiffrin, Earhart Foundation, and the Hertog Foundation, and contributions from numerous other donors. The Strauss Center was ably assisted in its fundraising efforts by Nina Botting-Herbst and Patrick McCusker, of the Office of the Dean of the Division of the Social Sciences at the University.

Senior scholars familiar with both Strauss's work and the texts he taught were commissioned as editors, with preliminary work done in most cases by student editorial assistants. The goal in editing the transcripts has been to preserve Strauss's original words as much as possible while making the transcripts easier to read. Strauss's impact (and indeed his charm) as a teacher is revealed in the sometimes informal character of his remarks. Readers should make allowance for the oral character of the transcripts. There are careless phrases, slips of the tongue, repetitions, and possible mistranscriptions. However enlightening the transcripts are, they cannot be regarded as the equivalent of works that Strauss himself wrote for publication.

Nathan Tarcov, Editor-in-Chief
Gayle McKeen, Managing Editor
August 2014

Editorial Headnote

The course was taught in a seminar form. Strauss began class with general remarks; a student then read aloud portions of the text, followed by Strauss's comments and responses to student questions and comments. The text assigned for this course was Plato, *Protagoras,* edited by Gregory Vlastos and translated by Benjamin Jowett and Martin Ostwald (Indianapolis, IN: The Library of the Liberal Arts/Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1956). When the text was read aloud in class, this transcript records the words as they appear in this edition of *Protagoras* and original spelling has been retained. Citations are included for all passages.

Audiotapes of all seventeen sessions of the course are available. This transcript was made from the newly-remastered audiofiles. Those portions of the recording that were inaudible are indicated by ellipses.

Most administrative details regarding paper or seminar topics or meeting rooms or times have been deleted, but reading assignments have been retained. Footnotes have been provided to identify persons, texts, and events to which Strauss refers.

The original transcript may be consulted in the Strauss archive in Special Collections at the University of Chicago Library.

This transcript was edited by Robert Bartlett, with assistance from David Kaye and Haidee Kowal. Chapter titles are provided by the editor.

The Transcript

Editor's Introduction

Robert C. Bartlett

In the spring quarter of 1965, Leo Strauss devoted his seminar, "The Political Philosophy of Plato," to a study of Plato's *Protagoras*. Strauss's remarks over the course of the quarter are an immensely useful aid to anyone beginning to interpret this complex dialogue, a dialogue at once charming, funny, and puzzling. In the seminar Strauss frequently brings to light and to life the dramatic context or the "action" of the dialogue, marrying the arguments at issue with the observable reactions to them—a blush, for example, or a sidelong glance, or Socrates's standing up as if to leave in the middle of things. Strauss takes up not only each of the dialogue's many parts but also their relation to one another: the opening performed scene with an unnamed "comrade"; the early morning conversation with the young and headstrong Hippocrates; Protagoras's justly famous myth of Prometheus and Epimetheus and the creation of "the moral species"; the subsequent analysis of wisdom and moderation, justice and piety; the long and strange digression concerning poetry; and the inquiry into courage and hedonism that leads to the dialogue's apparently abrupt and certainly highly charged conclusion.

Striking too is Strauss's openness to questions throughout the class and not least his gentle humor: the transcript records many times the students are provoked to laughter by Strauss, but Strauss himself often joins in the laughter (as the audio recordings indicate). Despite the gravity of the question of the identity of virtue that proves to be at the heart of the dialogue, despite its high-stakes question of the education—or corruption—of the young, the *Protagoras* has many comic touches that Strauss clearly delights in bringing to the fore.[i]

Of the seminar's seventeen meetings, the first three were given over to a summary of the class on Plato's *Gorgias* that Strauss had offered in the autumn quarter of 1963. Strauss suggests that the *Gorgias* is an examination of rhetoric in general and of Gorgias's version of it in particular, the *Protagoras* an examination of sophistry or at any rate of the most famous sophist, Protagoras. And the two dialogues clearly belong together inasmuch as rhetoric is closely tied to sophistry: according to Socrates's schema in the *Gorgias*, of which Strauss here reminds the students, sophistry is the sham art or "knack" corresponding to the genuine art of legislation, which develops or strengthens the soul in its health (just as the art of physical training develops or strengthens the body in its health); and rhetoric is the sham art or knack corresponding to the genuine art of justice, which, chiefly in the form of just punishment, returns the soul to health from sickness (just as the art of medicine returns the body to health). According to Socrates in the *Gorgias*, then, sophistry and rhetoric belong together as sham arts that falsely claim to

[i] "Both the traditional and the current interpretations of Plato may be said to bring out the tragic element in Plato's thought, but they neglect the comic element except when it hits one in the face. Many reasons can be given for this failure. I mention only one. Modern research on Plato originated in Germany, the country without comedy." "On the *Euthyphron*" in *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 206.

tend to the well-being of the soul; neither so-called art is what it appears to be or accomplishes the great good that it promises.

Socrates's schema also suggests that sophistry is the "higher" of the two pretenders, Strauss notes, because it corresponds to the genuinely higher art of legislation. But this superiority of sophistry to rhetoric, and hence of the *Protagoras* to the *Gorgias*, may be undercut according to Strauss by the fact that, while the question "what is rhetoric?" receives a clear answer in the *Gorgias*, the question "what is sophistry?" is raised but never answered in the *Protagoras*; hence the subtitle of the *Gorgias* is "On Rhetoric," that of the *Protagoras* simply "Sophists." What is more, Socrates goes voluntarily to speak with Gorgias and is accompanied there by Chaerephon, a companion of long standing who plays some part in Socrates's philosophic activity.[ii] By contrast, Socrates goes involuntarily to see Protagoras and is accompanied there by young Hippocrates, whose nature Socrates declines to praise when the opportunity to do so presents itself. Plato thus treats the "higher" subject of sophistry only by imposing on himself certain restrictions. (Of the three sophists appearing in the *Protagoras*, Strauss observes, Socrates seems to have most regard for Prodicus, rather less for Protagoras, and much less still for Hippias; in keeping with his general reticence in portraying wisdom, Plato wrote no dialogue entitled *Prodicus*, one dialogue entitled *Protagoras*, and two entitled *Hippias*.) The *Gorgias* can perhaps lay claim to being the more fundamental or comprehensive of the two dialogues, Strauss suggests, because it culminates in an explicit examination of *the* question, "How ought one to live?" and, to that end, considers at length the goodness of Socrates's way of life. The *Gorgias* treats rhetoric ultimately in its relation to the philosophic life.

What then of the *Protagoras* as Strauss presents it? The dialogue treats sophistry from the very beginning in its relation to the unphilosophic young, to the education of the young. As Strauss emphasizes, all the events that are narrated by Socrates originally took place in the presence and for the sake of Hippocrates, and in the course of the main event, when Socrates and Protagoras stand toe to toe, Socrates does all he can to prevent the union of Hippocrates and Protagoras by tarnishing the brilliant reputation of the famous teacher. The *Protagoras*, it turns out, is itself an exercise in rhetoric, in Plato's noble rhetoric; it seeks to persuade not only the unnamed comrade (and his circle) but also the reader that Socrates, far from being a "corrupter of the young," is in fact a dogged protector of them. Socrates is a just man and acts as a just man. In this way, Strauss indicates, the *Protagoras* demonstrates before our eyes, if not the unity of all the virtues, then at least the harmony of wisdom and justice. This is also one way to state the difference between Socrates the philosopher and Protagoras the sophist, for the sophist places wisdom, as the greatest of the virtues, in the company of courage alone. As Strauss makes plain, Protagoras thus regards justice, piety, and moderation as "virtues" of the unwise, of the many dupes, that as such the wise will not cultivate in themselves or admire in others. It hardly needs to be said that Protagoras includes himself among the wise. So it is that the combat between philosopher and sophist takes place on the field of virtue—as regards its proper identity or kinds and the teachable or unteachable character of it so understood.

[ii] Consider Plato, *Apology of Socrates* 20e8 and following; Aristophanes, *Clouds* 103 and following.

Other highlights of the seminar include Strauss's occasional asides or broader reflections that are prompted by reflection on the *Protagoras*, including an account of Pato's myth in general and in the *Gorgias* in particular. And in the context of a discussion of Protagoras's much-vaunted frankness, as distinguished from the reserve or "concealment" of his more retiring predecessors, Strauss also remarks that

"if there is a harmony between philosophy or wisdom and the city, i.e., the two good things, then prepolitical life is the bad thing or, to use a simple term, civilization is simply good. There is no problem of civilization. But if there is a disharmony between wisdom and the city, there is a problem of civilization. Prepolitical life is not *the* bad thing: there are vices of civilization which are as bad as the defects of prephilosophic life. Now Protagoras, who says there is no need for concealment, that there is a harmony between philosophy and the city, also says there is no problem of civilization: prepolitical life is absolutely terrible, and compared with it everything now is just wonderful . . . The Platonic view is stated, one can say, in the *Laws* 678a: civilization is the simultaneous development of virtues and vices."

To this Strauss adds the following "in passing":

"there is a certain similarity between Protagoras and modern enlightenment, as represented by Hobbes especially on the one hand, and Socrates and Rousseau's critique of the enlightenment on the other. This, I believe, is generally known, although probably not universally known. But we must not forget that there are also very important differences. In other words, if you make it a proportion: Protagoras is to Socrates as Hobbes is to Rousseau. Good. But the proportion is not identical; there is something that Protagoras and Socrates share by the mere fact that they are not modern, and which Hobbes and Rousseau share by the mere fact that they are modern. This later question is a bit more subtle and more difficult to answer, but of course that is not a reason for disavowing it."

* * *

Because Strauss never wrote a book-length interpretation of the *Protagoras*, these seminars constitute his most extensive remarks on it. He did, it is true, discuss parts of the dialogue in two publications—in *Natural Right and History* (1953) and at greater length in a review essay (1959) on Eric Havelock's *The Liberal Temper in Greek Politics*—discussions that, relatively brief though they are, deserve precedence over the more or less spontaneous remarks in the seminar.[iii] In the review essay, entitled "The Liberalism

[iii] *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 117; "The Liberalism of Classical Political Philosophy," *Review of Metaphysics* 12:3 (March 1959), 390-439; reprinted in *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 26-64. One might also consider the references to the *Protagoras* in the final chapter of *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963 [1938]), 142 and following; "On Plato's *Apology of Socrates* and *Crito*" in *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Chicago:

of Classical Political Philosophy," Strauss covers at least some of the same ground as, and is in general agreement with, the interpretation he was to offer six or so years later in the seminar. But perhaps it will be useful to sketch the use that Strauss made of the *Protagoras*, about a dozen years before his seminar, in *Natural Right and History*, as a supplement to the lectures but also as confirmation of the soundness of their general approach.

Strauss turns in *Natural Right and History* to Protagoras, "the most famous sophist," in the context of a general discussion of "conventionalism." Conventionalism is the view that all right is due not to nature, but to convention or law or custom; it owes its existence finally to mere human opinion. There is therefore nothing just in or by nature, and what is called "just" is without the peculiar fixity and worth attaching to the natural. Strauss distinguishes, however, between philosophic and vulgar conventionalism. For although both varieties agree that "by nature everyone seeks only his own good or that it is according to nature that one does not pay any regard to other people's good or that the regard for others arises only out of convention," they disagree sharply over what constitutes one's own good. According to vulgar conventionalism, that good consists in superiority over others, in having more than others, and, following out the logic of this to its conclusion, in living the life of a successful tyrant. For philosophic conventionalism, by contrast, the life according to nature is not the tyrannical one but the philosophic. As for the corruption of philosophic conventionalism into its vulgar counterpart, it "makes sense" to trace it to the sophists: if the sophists were not themselves vulgar conventionalists, they "may be said to have 'published' and therewith debased the conventionalist teaching of the pre-Socratic philosophers" (*Natural Right*, 114-115). In so doing they all but guaranteed that certain others would combine their vulgar understanding of the good life with the alleged insight into the conventional character of all justice or right.

It is in this context, to repeat, that Strauss considers Protagoras and, especially, his famous myth of Prometheus and Epimetheus, for that myth "adumbrates the conventionalist thesis" (117). As in his seminar, so also in *Natural Right* Strauss stresses the distinctions between nature, art, and convention implicit in Protagoras's *mythos*. Nature is represented there by the creation of all the mortal species, including of course the human species, that was the "subterraneous work of the gods," performed without light or understanding and hence differing in no way from the blundering work of Epimetheus ("Afterthought"). Technical art, in turn, which made and makes human life infinitely less miserable than it would be as a result of the doings of gods, is traceable in the myth to a theft from precisely gods. And finally there is convention or custom or law (*nomos*), which takes the form of Zeus's gift of justice to "all" human beings, the non-mythical equivalent of which is the so-called education—the repeated exhortations and beatings or threats of beatings—we receive from earliest youth that eventually transforms us into citizens marked by "political virtue," very much against our natural bent. Yet to benefit from membership in a political community, the sophist suggests, one need only *appear* to be just; the requirements of justice are "perfectly fulfilled by the mere

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University of Chicago Press, 1983), 54-55; "On the *Euthydemos*," in *Studies* 72; and "Liberal Education and Responsibility" in *Liberalism Ancient and Modern,* 12-13.

semblance of justice." As Protagoras puts it, one would be "mad" not to *claim* or *pretend* to be just. He does not say that sanity consists in being just or madness in being unjust. After all, as Protagoras also notes, there are those who are just but not wise, a fact (if it is a fact) that compels us to wonder whether the wise as such will ever be just. In a single masterful paragraph in *Natural Right and History*, and as he will also do in the seminar, Strauss strips off the theological dressing of Protagoras's myth to reveal the sophist's conventionalist teaching and its moral–political consequences.

Strauss's seminars on the *Protagoras* that are reproduced here are surely only an introduction to it, as he himself stresses and as every attentive reader will acknowledge. But precisely as an introduction to the dialogue, offered by a master teacher, they invite and foster further reflection on one's own.

Session 1: March 29, 1965

Sophistry and Rhetoric: Plato's *Gorgias* Reconsidered

Leo Strauss: Now let us begin at the beginning. We make one assumption which is not entirely clear but which is generally accepted, namely, that students of political science should have some knowledge of the history of political philosophy. Now such knowledge is supplied in the general survey course on the history of political philosophy, but some of you may wish to have a more detailed or more exact knowledge than can be supplied in such a course, a less global and more specialized knowledge. I offer therefore every second year a course on Plato's political philosophy.

Now Plato has presented his political philosophy in such a way that a report about it is particularly inadequate or unsatisfactory.[1] I shall not repeat now what I have said often in class, but I have now said it in print in *The City and Man*,[i] the first sixteen pages of the chapter on Plato's *Republic*, and I ask you to read that. I give therefore the course on Plato's political philosophy in the form of an interpretation of a single Platonic dialogue. The first choice would naturally be the *Republic*, but the *Republic* has one great defect—it is very long—and therefore I prefer a shorter dialogue.

The last time that I lectured on Plato's political philosophy I selected the *Gorgias*, on these grounds: the *Gorgias* leads up to the question which is in a way the broadest of all questions, namely: How should a man live? And the answer given is generally: the philosophic life is the right life. But in the *Gorgias* the philosophic life is said to be the truly political life, or rather, Socrates claims that he is the only true political man, statesman, in Athens. The explicit subject of the *Gorgias* is rhetoric, and rhetoric is asserted to be not an art, but a flattery, a kind of flattery, a sham. Every sham art is a spurious imitation of a genuine art and Socrates suggests this scheme: there are arts dealing with the body and arts dealing with the soul, and there is one which is called gymnastics for the body, and medicine. [LS writes on the blackboard[ii]] Building up the healthy body: gymnastics; restoring health when lost: medicine. Similarly, there are two arts here: one is called the legislative art, which is said to correspond with gymnastics, and another is called, let us say, the punitive art. The Greek word used is the same as justice in the sense of course of vindictive justice, chiefly punishment, [2]punishment being a kind of medicine for the soul. Now these two together are called the political art. Socrates says there is no common name for the two arts [concerning] the body. And now we come to the corresponding sham arts. Cosmetics, here, which makes the appearance of a healthy body by all kinds of things. And medicine, [corresponding to] that is the art of cooking,[3] pastry cooking, also a sham gratification. And here sophistry, and

[i] Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964).
[ii] Strauss continues writing on the blackboard as he presents this schema.

corresponding to that is rhetoric. That is the schema, the very ambiguous schema, which Socrates proposes in the *Gorgias*.

Now this implies that sophistry, however bad it may be, is in itself higher, or at least less ignoble than rhetoric, because it is positive, corresponds to the positive thing. Now this must make us interested in the question of what sophistry *is*. Sophistry is the subject of the dialogue *Protagoras*, and to the *Protagoras* I decided to devote this course. At any rate, the *Protagoras* and the *Gorgias*, that is my premise, seem to belong together in the same way in which sophistry and rhetoric belong together.[4]

Now before turning to the *Protagoras*, I propose to summarize the chief results of my fall 1963 course on the *Gorgias*,[iii] and I have to devote to this subject of the summary at least two meetings, perhaps three. Now the *Gorgias* consists of three clearly separated parts, and in this respect as well as in other respects it reminds us of the *Republic*. The *Republic*, you will recall, consists of the father–son part, the discussion of Socrates with Cephalus and his son Polemarchus; then of the Thrasymachus part; and then of the two brothers' parts, the bulk of the work, the discussions with Glaucon and Adeimantus. Correspondingly, the *Gorgias* consists of three parts: a discussion with Gorgias (Gorgias being the most famous orator), with Polus, and with Callicles. The Callicles section is by far the largest and at first glance the most important, just as in the *Republic* the Glaucon–Adeimantus section is by far the largest and at first glance the most important. Gorgias and Polus are foreign teachers of rhetoric, Polus being Gorgias's young adherent. Callicles is a young Athenian about to enter politics. This all corresponds to the *Republic*: Cephalus and Polemarchus are not Athenian citizens [but] are metics; and Thrasymachus is of course a foreign teacher of rhetoric; and Glaucon and Adeimantus are Athenians, just as Callicles is an Athenian.

The dialogue begins with the words of Callicles: "quote, War and battle, unquote." No other dialogue begins that way. This indicates that the dialogue is very emphatically *polemical*, fighting. Socrates attacks rhetoric, and therewith the political life as ordinarily practiced, with the utmost radicalism. The opposition between the philosophic life and the political life as ordinarily understood is *the* theme of the dialogue *Gorgias*. The dialogue *Gorgias* is, furthermore—and I ask you again to read these sixteen pages I wrote about the Platonic dialogue in general, and I make tacit use of these remarks here[5]—a voluntary dialogue. Perhaps I'll explain this briefly.[6] Among the many differences among the dialogues, there is one difference of some importance, between voluntary and compulsory dialogues. A compulsory dialogue is a dialogue into which Socrates is compelled for sheer decency, although he dislikes it. For example, his dialogue with the Athenian *dēmos* on the occasion of his accusation is surely a compulsory dialogue. But the *Charmides* is perhaps the most simple example of a dialogue which is voluntary. Socrates has been back from a battle, the war, and rushes to the gymnasium where the most gifted boys of Athens are, and is so pleased to be back to his favorite haunt—one of them. Now the *Gorgias* is a voluntary dialogue. Socrates is eager to speak with Gorgias. He goes to the building where Gorgias is. He is accompanied by his companion,

[iii] Audiofiles and a transcript of the course sessions are available on the Leo Strauss Center website.

Chaerephon, the same man who went to Delphi to ask the god whether there is anyone wiser than Socrates. But Chaerephon had kept him back[7] [in] the marketplace so that they missed Gorgias's exhibition of his art. When Socrates[8] hears that they have come too late, Chaerephon expresses his willingness to repair the damage which he had caused. He is a friend of Gorgias, which means he is closer to Gorgias than Socrates is. But Socrates does not wish to hear, to listen to an exhibition of Gorgias's art, to one of these show speeches for which Gorgias was so famous; but Socrates wants to find out from Gorgias what the power of his art is, and secondly, what claim Gorgias raises regarding his teaching, meaning whether Gorgias believes that he can convey the power of his art to his pupils.

Now this conversation about why Socrates comes and why they come too late takes place outside of the building in which Gorgias stays. When they have entered the building and see Gorgias, Socrates asks Chaerephon to ask Gorgias about his art. Again, Chaerephon is closer to Gorgias than Socrates is. Polus asks Chaerephon to address the questions to him because Gorgias is tired: he has made this long speech. We draw from this a provisional conclusion that Gorgias is not at the peak of his condition. He is tired. We do not get a full and adequate picture of this famous man. Now Polus's answer to Chaerephon implies that the good life is the life in accordance[9] [with] art, art in the old sense—craft, handicraft—and art is understood here in contradistinction to chance. To live according to art, to thought, to order, to rule is better than to live at random. And the best life is a life in accordance with the art of rhetoric. Now Socrates is dissatisfied with this answer. He says Polus has not sufficiently practiced the art of dialectics, but practiced too much the art of rhetoric. Polus has praised rhetoric as a wonderful thing, but he has not said what rhetoric is. Dialectics—that is the alternative to rhetoric here—would tell us what rhetoric is. Blaming and praising is the[10] [concern] of rhetoric; saying what a thing is, [that] is dialectics. Does this distinction between rhetoric and dialectics remind you of something with which you are familiar outside of Plato in present-day discussion? To say that rhetoric is best is a rhetorical statement. To define rhetoric is a dialectical statement. Yes?

Student: The fact-value distinction.

LS: Yes,[11] and that is very true. The distinction between rhetoric and dialectics has something to do with the present-day distinction between science and nonscience. There is something to that, but still it is misleading. I mean, the two distinctions are not identical. Why? Because according to Socrates you have first to know what rhetoric is before you blame it or praise it. But when you know what it is, you know also its rank, and therefore whether it is very noble, medium noble, not very noble, or ignoble. So it is not [identical], but there is a certain kinship indeed.

Socrates asks then Gorgias to answer the question of what the power of his art is, [and says] that he should give a brief answer. Now this has to do again with the distinction between rhetoric and dialectic, because the rhetorician as such is a maker of long speeches. The dialectician on the other hand is a maker of short speeches: "What did you say?" "Say it again." "On what grounds?" This is a maker of short speeches. Now[12] in

dialectic, every step can be carefully considered, whereas in rhetorical speech what is so important of course is the overall effect of the whole speech, especially on the passions. Now Gorgias claims to be a perfect master of speech, i.e., to be as good at making short speeches as at making long speeches, and therefore he says: Of course, I will oblige you; I will make a short speech. Now this is another handicap of Gorgias. The first handicap was that he gets tired out from his long speeches, the second that he is compelled to give short answers; and the consequence of this and another handicap which we will see soon is that he is unable to state his case for rhetoric, and for his rhetoric in particular.[13]

I am sure there are quite a few among you who say: What does this strange comedy mean? What is the interest of it for us? A perfectly legitimate question, but which I cannot answer now. I mean, either you have a certain confidence that I am not a—how should I say it? A business? Now how do you call this, a comedian? [Laughter] No—a showbusiness, or you have not.[iv][14] Let us therefore wait.

Now Gorgias answers, first: Rhetoric is an art that has to do with speeches. But Socrates says: All art has to do with speeches. For example, medicine has to do with speeches about health, hasn't it? All speeches deal with some subject matter. An art dealing with speeches which do not deal with subject matter does not exist. Gorgias tries to get out of this fix by saying: Yes, but some arts proceed chiefly through manual work and can be practiced in silence, that is to say without speech, whereas others proceed chiefly or solely through speech. An extreme example: arithmetic. Speech. And you can of course also figure silently, but the actual work is when you speak to yourself; whereas the work of a sculptor, his art is practiced silently. He doesn't have to figure "speakingly." Rhetoric is one of the arts which proceed chiefly through speeches. But still it must have subject matter. That's simple. Its subject matter[15] [is] the greatest and best of human affairs.[v] But what are these greatest and best of human affairs? Is not perhaps health the most important thing, or strength, or wealth? Now Socrates argues this out in one form which is to be called a dialogue within the dialogue. In other words, he makes the physician speak in favor of health being the greatest thing. He makes the gymnastics teacher speak in favor of strength or beauty being the best thing, and he makes the moneymaker speak in favor of wealth being the best thing. This means[16] [that] this dialogue within a dialogue, which is a very common occurrence in Platonic dialogues, has here however a special meaning, a special purpose. And this, by the way, is a general rule. There are a limited number of devices which Plato used. One is, for example, the dialogue within the dialogue. But this may have a very different function in different contexts. Now in this context the function of the dialogue within the dialogue is to show Gorgias his competitors. Gorgias says: I teach the most important thing. And then he shows him[17] the teacher of medicine, who raises the same claim. By[18] reminding Gorgias of his competitors, he adds a third predicament to the two which we have already seen: his tiredness and the compulsion to[19] give brief answers.

[iv] That is, you either have a certain confidence that Strauss is not a "showbusiness" type or you do not.

[v] 451d.

A general lesson from this:[20] [in doing] these things—for example, the dialogue within the dialogue showing these competitors—Socrates himself uses rhetoric, because these are rhetorical devices. Or his dialectics as used here is rhetorical—[21]a mixture of dialectics and rhetoric. And if we may make a big jump, in no way borne out by what I have said now but a kind of hypothesis: the *Gorgias*, whatever it may do regarding rhetoric, exhibits Socrates's rhetoric, which is in no way the theme of the dialogue, but it exhibits it in deed.

Now we are still confronted with these questions: What are the greatest human things?[22] What is happiness? And Gorgias says that the good which rhetoric produces is in truth the greatest good and the cause of both freedom and ruling over others in one's city. For rhetoric enables a man to persuade people by speeches in political assemblies, and thus to control the physicians, the gymnastics teachers, the moneymakers, or whoever may be competitors of the rhetorician. We may say rhetoric is the art of persuading political assemblies about politically relevant matters. That is surely true, but it does not go very deep. Socrates[23] continues as follows: You say rhetoric persuades, but does not the mathematician too persuade? We must make a distinction between teaching and persuading. Rhetoric does not teach as mathematics teaches. It only persuades.

Now while this exchange goes on, there occurs a shift of emphasis to one particular kind of rhetoric: forensic rhetoric, the rhetoric practiced before law courts, the kind of rhetoric which is concerned with just and unjust things as such and which concerns the individual who accuses or is accused. And here in this context the impression is related that just and unjust things are the sole theme of rhetoric. Now after Socrates has led Gorgias to this point, a leading of which Gorgias is fully unaware, he leads him again to political rhetoric proper, to what the Greeks called deliberative rhetoric—that is, what is going on in the assembly where you decide about laws, peace and war, and so on. With an explicit reference to the potential students in the audience, because there are many people around, Socrates induces Gorgias to reveal the immense power of rhetoric. The immense power of rhetoric. Every ambitious student in the audience—potential tyrants, so to speak—must become Gorgias's pupil if Gorgias succeeds in showing that without[24] [his] training you will never succeed in the arena, just as today [in this country] one could perhaps[25] make a case that you have to go to law school, and perhaps to this or that law school if you want to be highly successful—some people would also say through political science departments. But at this moment it seemed to be clear that being trained by Gorgias could be the best way of becoming an outstanding speaker.

The main[26] answer of Gorgias can be reduced to this simple proposition: Rhetoric is quasi-omnipotent. He tells a number of examples of what rhetoricians have achieved both in private life and in public life. In private life, he gives[27] [this] example: his brother was a physician and could not persuade a patient to take a bitter pill, but he—the rhetorician, Gorgias—succeeded where the physician completely failed.[vi] And so you see how eminently powerful rhetoric is. So after having made clear how powerful rhetoric is, he can't help disregarding the drawback of that very power: because it is so powerful it is naturally feared and distrusted, and therefore the teachers of rhetoric are in danger of

[vi] 456b.

being expelled from the cities and even killed.[vii][28] Gorgias says that is very deplorable, because every art can be misused. I mean, a gymnastic teacher, for example, wants to teach the boy so that he will be a good soldier later on, etc., but if this boy hits his father you can't blame the gymnastic teacher for that. Similarly, if a student of rhetoric misuses his art, that's not the fault of the professor of rhetoric, and he must not be blamed for that. In brief, rhetoric can be used unjustly, but it ought not to be used unjustly. In itself it is as just as gymnastics, which also can be misused.

Now Socrates goes on as follows: What does the power of rhetoric then mean? The orator is superior to the expert, to the knower (for example, to the physician[29]), especially in persuading crowds, i.e., ignoramuses, he himself being also an ignoramus, let us say, in the matter of weaponry. And the experts have a certain opinion. Let us assume that the experts are not split, but the experts have no power of persuading crowds. I mean, they can talk to other experts. So there must be someone who has no knowledge but only some information given to him by the experts, and he talks. He is an ignoramus, he talks to ignoramuses, and that's that. This is not a denial of the power of rhetoric, of course, but only a spelling out of what that power means. Ultimately, the power of rhetoric has to do with the superior bodily power of the large mass of ignoramuses over the small minority of non-ignoramuses.

Yet Socrates proceeds to question the power of rhetoric itself by raising this question: Is the orator also ignorant of the just and unjust, the base and noble, the good and bad? What about that? Must your pupil, Gorgias, know[30] [the just and unjust] things before you teach him how to speak, or do you teach him the just and unjust things, etc., while you teach him how to speak? Gorgias, with Olympian authority, says: If he doesn't happen to know these things which, so to speak, every child knows, I will teach them to him too.[viii] But Socrates says: The man who has learned the music things [now listen carefully—LS] becomes a musical man. I must try to express something in English which is not so easily expressible in English. A man who has learned the "horse-ic" things (from "horse") becomes a horse man, a horse-ic man. In Greek that is perfectly simple. Now we come to the real point. A man who has learned the just things, does he not become a just man? Gorgias says: Yes. [LS taps on the table] And why he says yes, that's a very great riddle, but the fact is undeniable. Hence Socrates concludes the orator will never act unjustly or misuse his power because he knows the just things. But he who knows the just things is just, and he will never act unjustly, [will] never misuse his rhetoric.[ix]

This conclusion should make Gorgias very attractive to decent Athenians. Rhetoric as taught by Gorgias cannot possibly be used for any bad purpose.[31] Socrates is friendly to Gorgias. He says: Look what a paragon you have here; he is not only a marvelous teacher of rhetoric, he teaches a rhetoric which can never be used for any unjust purposes. But Socrates is not quite so philanthropic. He points out to Gorgias that he has said the contrary before, namely, that rhetoric can be misused. In a word, the result is that Gorgias does not know how rhetoric is related to justice.There is an explicit self-contradiction

[vii] 457b–c.
[viii] 460a.
[ix] 461a–b.

which is not quite clear.[32] The rhetorician may be unjust and therefore, since people know that, he is in danger:[33] they don't trust him. The alternative is that the rhetorician cannot be unjust; hence he will not be in danger. Does that not follow, if no one mistrusts him? But you can also put an implicit self-contradiction; again, the first position is clear. The rhetorician may be unjust; therefore he is in danger. But the rhetorician is omnipotent; hence he is not in danger. He can handle every accusation. People may distrust him as much as they want, they may accuse him of a capital crime; he will never be condemned and he will always prove his superiority because of the tremendous power of rhetoric. But if he is omnipotent, it is of course safe for him to be unjust. He is safe especially through forensic rhetoric, because distrust leads to accusation.[34]

This leads us to a somewhat different stratum. Gorgias later suggests that rhetoric is omnipotent.[35] This is commonsensically an absurd thing, of course, but still there is something implied in it. In a way, Socrates[36] also asserts a certain omnipotence when he says [that] he who knows the just things is just. Knowledge guarantees justice; [it] is also a kind of omnipotence of speech. And this, we can say, is what Socrates and Gorgias, these two antagonists share: a certain view according to which there is an omnipotence of speech. That they have in mind different kinds of speeches is true. But, by the way, if someone regards the thesis "omnipotence of speech" or "preponderant power of speech" as absurd, think of the many people who say today that the truth must win out in the end. Reason must eventually win: that's exactly the point which we are considering, if there is such a preponderance—in the extreme case an omnipotence—of *logos*, which is both speech and reason.

The result of this very short conversation between Socrates and Gorgias is that Gorgias is knocked out. Polus, who is not tired out, rises in his defense.[x] He disapproves of Socrates's procedure. Socrates raised an improper question, namely, the question whether the rhetorician must know the just things. This is a kind of question which one doesn't raise in our circles. You can easily find contemporary parallels for that. I could even, if I had looked it up, give you[37] the page and the volume of the *American Political Science Review* where this accusation was made when I made a certain statement about a certain school. I was accused.[xi] This kind of thing is not to be said; it is irrelevant, immaterial. According to Polus, Gorgias was ashamed to say no[38] where he should have said yes, and so he got into trouble. Now Polus, who is much younger and not exhausted, tries to turn the tables on Socrates by now becoming the questioner, because he has seen that this Olympian thing in Gorgias—"I can answer all questions"[xii]—is a very dangerous thing, and that, in a way, the humble man who doesn't answer questions [but] only asks questions is tactically in a much better position. And so[39] Polus tries to imitate Socrates, but that is of course a different situation because Socrates had never claimed that he is able to answer all questions and therefore the situation is somewhat different.

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[x] 461b.

[xi] John H. Schaar and Sheldon S. Wolin, "A Critique," review of Herbert J. Storing, ed., *Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics*, *American Political Science Review* 57 (1963): 125–50. Cf. Leo Strauss, "Reply to Schaar and Wolin," *American Political Science Review* 57 (1963): 152–55.

[xii] 462a.

Socrates denies now in the interchange with Polus what he had not denied in talking to Gorgias: namely, that rhetoric is an art. He says now it is merely a knack acquired by experience, which produces some grace and pleasure. Well, say, what a comedian on the stage does: he knows that this kind of joke on this occasion will hit, and so on and so on. Socrates doesn't know whether this view of rhetoric applies to Gorgias's kind of rhetoric, for Gorgias's art has not become clear and therefore one does not know. Gorgias's view of rhetoric and Gorgias's rhetoric itself are not revealed in the dialogue called after him. That is very remarkable. Socrates states his view of rhetoric[40] to Gorgias, but with the understanding that he will discuss this view not with Gorgias but with Polus. Polus will be used as a kind of guinea pig to bring to light Socrates's view. But Gorgias as it were is silent; [he] only listens. Gorgias's reaction to it will also not come out: neither Gorgias's view of rhetoric nor his view of Socrates's rhetoric will come out thematically. This is the character of the dialogue.

Now Socrates's definition of rhetoric I have already indicated in that schema. Rhetoric is a kind of or part of flattery.[xiii] Flattery is directed toward a seeming well-being of body and soul, whereas the arts are directed toward the true well-being of body and soul. In other words, flatteries aim at the most pleasant, whereas the arts aim at the best. Furthermore, arts are able to give an account, a *logos*, of what they are doing. The shoemaker, when you watch him, can tell you why he makes this move or that, whereas the flatterers are unable to give an account of what they are doing. Now this is what Socrates develops at great length. There are of course great difficulties here. For example, can there not be an art dealing with the pleasant, or at least dealing also with the pleasant? Is, for example, a physician not concerned also with inflicting the minimum of pain, or maybe even giving the maximum of pleasure to his patients while operating on them, etc.? Good. I mention one more point. The legislative art produces genuine health of the soul. Justice restores genuine health of the soul. Justice is here understood as an art. I cannot help this difficulty. This whole schema seems to imply that the legislative art is the highest form of human knowledge because it is one which makes the human soul perfect, the best. What the relation of the legislative art to philosophy or to[41] dialectic is is obscure. It is possible that philosophy or dialectics are here simply disregarded in[42] or abstracted from[43] this schema.

Now Polus is of course shocked by the suggestion that rhetoric should not be an art but only something as low as [or even lower than] cosmetics.[44] He argues as follows: If rhetoric were a kind of flattery, i.e., a low thing, the orators would not have power, the power in the cities which they actually have. In other words, Polus tries to show that rhetoric is an art by showing its power. According to him, rhetoricians have the powers which tyrants have, which incidentally implies that rhetoric is essentially unjust, because it is understood that tyrants are essentially unjust.[45] But to follow his argument more precisely: according to Polus tyrants also have the power in the cities, but can one say that[46] since the tyrants are very powerful they have an art, that there is such a thing as a tyrannical art? This is at least a question. Polus somehow does not consider that. At any

[xiii] 463b.

rate, the issue whether rhetoric is an art is dropped. The discussion comes to center around the question,[47] What is power?[xiv]

According to Socrates, power is something good for him who has the power. In other words, if you have a[48] man who is very strong and cannot use his strength in any way for himself, he is not powerful, and so on. According to Polus, power is the ability to do what *seems* to be best to the individual concerned; and this of course is a dubious thing because, as Socrates points out, something may seem to be good to a fool without being good for him, and therefore to that extent he has no power. Polus understands by a powerful man a man who can kill, exile, impoverish, and so on everyone he likes to kill, etc.[xv] In other words, [he has] a vulgar notion of what a powerful man is: he can make or break his fellow men. Being powerful means according to that view being able to do what one wills. But Socrates says [that] whatever we do, we do for some purpose, and the purpose is that[49] [which] we truly will. For example, we do not will primarily to kill, but we kill because we will some good for us and believe we can get that good by killing. But what is good for us with a view to which we might kill or not? The actions as actions are meaningless and therefore neutral. They are done for the sake of ends, for example, wealth and other things which are good in themselves. Striving for wealth and doing what brings about wealth is therefore good, whereas mere killing is not good, because it may get us into trouble. Sensible men choose the useful things, not merely things which are spectacular. A man who can do everything but does not get what is good for him is of course not powerful. It is here tacitly denied that a reasonable man will ever do anything from a whim for the fun of it, at random; for example, sitting down or rising without a purpose. That is tacitly denied, abstracted from, and that is of course a point we have to consider.

At this point now the dialogue makes a decisive turn. Polus is obviously dissatisfied and returns to his original assertion by giving it a personal character: “Would you, Socrates, not wish to do in the city whatever you like, or do you not envy people who can do what they like—making and breaking, and so on?”[xvi] Socrates says: Do you mean killing justly or killing unjustly? And he explains: Killing unjustly is altogether bad; and killing justly is at best a distasteful, hence bad, necessity. The good for the sake of which a reasonable man acts is justice, or at least compatible with justice. Hence, to suffer injustice, while this is an evil, is a lesser evil than doing injustice. These are the well-known theses of Socrates around which the whole dialogue turns. Polus, however, says [that] injustice and happiness are perfectly compatible.[xvii] Socrates [says that] killing is under no circumstances something good, and that means there are actions which are under all circumstances bad, which are under no circumstances neutral—like, well . . . which may be a bad action under certain circumstances, and may be a good action in others, and in others it may be indifferent. Now here we have in this situation, if we analyze this thing, an implicit contradiction: all actions conducive to the end—say, wealth—are good. The alternative: certain actions are bad in all circumstances. This means that the highest

[xiv] 466b.
[xv] 466d.
[xvi] 468e.
[xvii] 470c.

consideration cannot be limited to the end, say, wealth or whatever it may be, but concerns also the quality of the means. Now it is quite interesting that this first proposition, that all actions conducive to a good end are good, is made when Socrates is the questioner, while the other, commonsensical view, that certain actions are bad in all circumstances, is made when Polus is the questioner or Socrates the answerer. Now this second view, that certain actions are bad in all circumstances, corresponds to the ordinary understanding of justice, and this implies that Polus does not truly know what justice is, and according to the logic of the argument with Polus, he is an unjust man because he doesn't know what justice is.[50] Of course this is also very bad for Gorgias, because Gorgias has claimed his pupils will all be just, and now you see here a flagrant case of an unjust pupil of Gorgias. Gorgias is wrong. We see how the discussion with Polus throws light back on the discussions with Gorgias, and therefore how rightly the dialogue is called *Gorgias*, because the discussion with Polus, and later on with Callicles, illuminates Gorgias's . . . Gorgias is wrong in asserting or implying that rhetoric is necessarily just. The question[51] remains to be settled, however: Is rhetoric nevertheless quasi-omnipotent?

I repeat that Socrates shows this all to Gorgias in the case of this pupil, Polus, using Polus as a kind of guinea pig. He does this all for the benefit of Gorgias, and now in the sequel he does something else. Socrates shows that *he* and not Gorgias teaches Polus justice and therewith, according to that logic, makes him just. This we have to consider later.[52]

But we cannot merely read. We have to think while we read. Now Socrates admits that suffering injustice is bad, a very commonsensical view. And hence killing justly in self-defense is of course all right, and surely better than to be killed unjustly. But then the question: if self-defense is just, then of course forensic rhetoric may be just. Someone may try to kill you not by shooting at you but by trapping you. There is a technical term for that—railroading?

Student: Framing.

LS: Framing. By framing you. Now if you are entitled to take cover when someone shoots at you, you are entitled to counteract the framing by forensic rhetoric. Forensic rhetoric must be just. This is not brought out here, and we must keep this in mind. In other words, the wholesale condemnation of rhetoric which Socrates seems to propose is irrational, and we have to find the reason why Socrates makes these extreme statements.

Now Socrates turns to refuting Polus's assertion according to which an unjust man may be happy or blessed. Before beginning with the refutation, he admits to Polus that Polus's view is the view of most men, including such pillars of society as Nicias and Pericles or their families.[xviii] In other words, Polus has opinion on his side. Common opinion is immoral, or at the very least not very strictly moral. Socrates renders his own view more precise by saying that the unjust men would improve their fate if they underwent punishment by gods and men. That is to say, spelled out very graphically, that an evildoer tortured to death while watching as his wife and children are tortured to death is happier than if by escaping the torturers he would become a tyrant and be "quote happy unquote"

[xviii] 472a–b.

ever after. So that is a very paradoxical assertion, and Socrates says: But this is what all people, with the exception of me, think.

Now Polus claims that Socrates is crazy.[xix] [Laughter] Everybody would agree with Polus in rejecting Socrates's assertion. Socrates however claims that everyone would agree with *him*. So in other words, he claims that he stands for the common opinion of mankind, but Socrates adds a qualification: everyone would agree with him if they were to argue the thing out dialectically, not rhetorically. Not arguing dialectically, everyone would agree with Polus, but in arguing dialectically, i.e., led by Socrates, everyone would agree with Socrates. So in the sequel Socrates proves at least this much: that Polus is compelled to agree with him. In a dialectical exchange, the cause of justice wins. Socrates exhibits the power of dialectics in an argument between individuals—Socrates is alone, Polus alone—not in what would happen in a law court when,[53] [say], an orator addresses a crowd. The implication is [this]: the just man is lost before a jury. Well, we know a famous case of which Socrates must have thought, but surely the author of the . . . the case of Socrates.[54] If you look up in the *Gorgias* 474a to b and compare it with the *Apology of Socrates* 37a, you are in for a surprise, because in the *Gorgias* Socrates says he does not do a certain thing which he admits doing in the *Apology*—namely, to have a conversation with the many. And Socrates calls his apology a conversation with the city of Athens, i.e., with the many. This in passing.

There is another difficulty, a graver difficulty. People may not be able to refute or to contradict the thesis of justice according to which suffering injustice is better than doing injustice. They may nevertheless not be convinced by that failure. Polus refers to the consensus of all men in public assemblies, and Socrates refers to the consensus of all men in dialectical exchange, one with one. But Polus also refers to the consensus of all men in their feeling, and Socrates to the consensus of all men in non-self-contradictory speech. In other words, if you think of this example of the man tortured to death—you remember that?—seeing his wife and children tortured to death, and so on,[55] rather that than escaping and becoming a tyrant, what Polus says [is] that's the way in which people feel, and what Socrates implies is that they cannot maintain that in speech. Do you see the point, the difference? And it is of course then a question: What is truer, the feeling, even if this feeling leads to self-contradiction when expressed, or the non-self-contradictory speech? In other words, the great question is: How powerful *is* that non-self-contradictory speech? How powerful is rational speech? How powerful is reason? We have seen before that the dialogue suggests in different ways, in a Gorgian way and in a Socratic way, that there is a preponderance, not to say omnipotence, of *logos*. And here we see from the other side that this is a question. This hypothesis of the preponderance or omnipotence of *logos* will be tested in the *Gorgias*. And you see how this is connected with the particular problem of rhetoric, because rhetoric is of course not strictly rational speech, but it is nevertheless speech. And[56] what is the power of speech compared with other things? With what other things you will see soon, in case you do not—[xx]

[xix] 473a.

[xx] The tape was changed at this point.

Polus asserts, to repeat, that[57] doing injustice is [better][xxi] than suffering injustice, but he also says that it is baser[58] than suffering injustice. But "baser"[59] in Greek[60] means you get a bad reputation if you act unjustly. But still,[61] acting unjustly can be very profitable. Well, you only have to read the story of Mr. Giancana[xxii] and other gentlemen to understand the thesis of Polus. Polus, in other words, refers to a difference between the good and the noble. The good and the noble. Now the noble things, Socrates tries to show, are such either because they are pleasant or because they are useful. Now partly this has to do with Greek usage, which I cannot[62] help.[63] One would have to make a very complicated translation with different English terms to bring out the equivalent of that. The word which I translate "the noble," *kalon*, means also fine and beautiful. Now when you say something is beautiful, perhaps you mean either it is pleasant—a beautiful smell is obviously a pleasant smell—or[64] [it is useful]. We call something beautiful that works beautifully because it does its job well: it is useful. And correspondingly, the ugly or base things are so either because they are painful or because they are harmful. Now if to act unjustly is baser, uglier than suffering injustice, doing injustice is more unpleasant than suffering injustice, or it is more harmful than suffering injustice. But doing injustice is obviously not more unpleasant than suffering injustice, as you see in a simple example: to hit someone over the head[65] is very unpleasant to the man who is hit over the head but not necessarily unpleasant to the hitter. I think this is clear. Hence doing injustice is more harmful than suffering injustice, contrary to what Polus has asserted.

Now I will not go into a deeper analysis of this argument; I will only say that Socrates has not proved his point, because if you prove someone has contradicted himself, you have of course not proven which of the two contradictory assertions is a preferable assertion. Is this clear? I mean, if you show a man—if you show a man who says that A is B, and force him to admit that A is not B [LS writes on the blackboard], then you have not proven that A is not B; you only have proven that he contradicts himself, and this is therefore an open question which of the two things is right. So in other words, Socrates has not proven here that doing injustice is worse than suffering injustice; he has only shown that Polus contradicts himself in this respect.[66]

So what Socrates has done is he has *persuaded* Polus to prefer the view that doing injustice is worse than suffering injustice—which is a feat, undeniably, but [it is] not a refutation. Socrates possesses undeniably the art of rhetoric, the art of persuasion, although Socrates's rhetoric, that is also clear, is an essentially just rhetoric.[67] Let us draw this conclusion. The [art of] rhetoric is not only the theme of the *Gorgias*, which [it] obviously is, but it is also the *mode* of the dialogue. It is a rhetorical discussion of rhetoric. And if we take this into consideration, the rhetorical character of the discussion, generally speaking the mode of the discussion as distinguished from the content of the discussion, we will transform the two-dimensionality of the printed page, where every sentence is as weighty as every other sentence, so to speak, into the three-dimensionality of what is going on in the souls of those participating. And the latter alone is true understanding.

[xxi] Here a small portion of the transcript relies on the original transcript. Here the original transcript reads "worse," evidently an error or misstatement.

[xxii] Salvatore "Sam" Giancana (1908-1975), a notorious mob leader in Chicago.

Now[68] after having settled this point, that doing injustice is worse than suffering injustice, Socrates continues as follows. Suffering justly for having committed injustice is punishment. But all just things are noble or beautiful things; hence being justly punished is noble or beautiful. But being punished is not pleasant: [this is] particularly clear in the case of corporeal punishment. Hence just punishment is good, namely, it is good for the soul: the soul is freed[69] by punishment from injustice. Punishment is medicine for the soul. Now justly or correctly inflicted punishment is medicine for the soul, i.e., an art, the art called *dikē* in Greek, right or justice, but in this particular application punitive justice. Hence it follows necessarily that the properly punished tyrant or orator is better off than the non-punished tyrant or orator.

Now here are some questions. Polus has no way any more to avoid these consequences; he is caught. Now in the first place, one premise: All just things are noble or beautiful. Is this true? Well, those who have done some reading in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and other places know that there is one conspicuous exception to that rule, namely, that just punishment, save other just things, is also noble.[xxiii] A just action is a noble action, but to undergo just punishment is not noble. That's common sense. Do you admire a man for going to jail? That is part of the noble, that there is something which can be admired. So this is here presupposed and vitiates the whole argument. Secondly, if being punished is noble according to the logic here, punishing is a noble act. Now as a noble act it must either be useful to the punisher or pleasant to the punisher, but if it's not useful to the punisher, assuming that the punisher is a just man, he doesn't become more just by inflicting punishment. Hence, it must be pleasant for him. . . . Good. The third point: Is it true that receiving punishment makes men better? You know, no topic is more topical today than this one, but it was a question at all times. Does punishment make men more just? Two other virtues were mentioned in that context: wisdom and courage. Do men become wiser by coercion? Courageous, perhaps. It all depends: coercion can do something to make men in a sense courageous. You know? But[70] it is impossible to become wise by coercion, punishment from coercion. How come that coercion should have this tremendous power regarding justice, and no power regarding wisdom? Is it so that *logos*, reasoning, is not sufficient for making men just, whereas it is sufficient for teaching them, for giving them theoretical insight? If all vice, including injustice, is ignorance, as was implied in the Polus section, not punishment but learning, teaching, would lead men away from injustice. Again, that is of course in the form of the question of rehabilitation; that is today the main discussion. If injustice is removed by punishment, then can justice be a kind of knowledge, as it was supposed to be? What has coercion to do with teaching? Well, of course we say: I'll teach you a lesson. You say [that] to a naughty boy. And in a way coercion does teach, but of course it is not exactly what we do in classrooms, for example.

Now let us apply this to rhetoric, or rather let us see how the conclusion which Socrates draws [applies] to rhetoric. If all these things which he has shown to Polus are correct, rhetoric is of little use to the just man. The question of just forensic rhetoric, when[71] [such a man] is unjustly accused, is not even alluded to. Rhetoric is of some use to the just man

[xxiii] Consider Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric* I.9 (1366b31–33 and context).

only for accusing those unjust men for whom he cares. For example, if he should have committed a crime, or his friends or his fatherland, individuals or groups for which he cares: accusing them, there rhetoric is good. And that means[72] bringing, say, one's friend to the judge for the improvement of his soul, [just] as you bring him to a dentist for the improvement of his teeth. On the other hand, Socrates says one ought to prevent by all means one's enemies from being punished for their unjust acts:[73] that serves them right, that they embezzled that money and to go to Florida and whatever else they might do. [Laughter] Now Polus is not convinced [laughter], but he is unable to defend his position. He is[74] rendered speechless, and we have here a clear case of a conflict between the feeling of a man and what he can maintain by speech. And the mere fact that this possibility exists—well, we all have had this experience somewhat, [when] presented with a very persuasive case and we were unable to say anything against it, and yet we were unconvinced. This alone shows a certain essential weakness of speech, because we did it also in cases where we found later on that the man was right in this speech which did not convince us.

Now in the Gorgias section, to summarize, we have this situation. "Rhetoric is in itself just" is one assertion, opposed by: "rhetoric is necessarily unjust because of its omnipotence." You know, you can't take any chances because he can always talk himself out of a [fix].[xxiv] In the Polus section, Socrates asserts in the sharpest way [that] rhetoric is unjust.[75] Polus himself says this, as a matter of fact, by comparing the orator to the tyrant. And Socrates says rhetoric is altogether bad: it is flattery. Yet when we read carefully, we see [that] it is not altogether bad; it is good for self-accusation, as he says. But we, as readers and as critical readers say: Why is it not also good for just self-defense?[76] And the question would then be: Why is self-accusation stressed and self-defense treated with silence? And the answer would be that in this dialogue Socrates seems to abstract from all good things other than justice. You do not become more unjust by being unjustly condemned. Life, liberty, and the other goods are disregarded; the only thing which is considered is justice. And this has something to do with the fact that the highest art which appears within the horizon up to this point is the legislative art and not any higher art. Only through this abstraction from all goods other than justice is it possible to maintain the omnipotence or quasi-omnipotence of speeches. But if speeches have this tremendous power, why is there any need for punishment? Punishment is obviously not mere speech, but [being] locked up or something more . . . mere speech. Above all, in all this discussion of justice which we have seen, there is not for one moment the question raised, let alone answered: What is justice? Does this ring a bell, this fact? Mr. Dry?

Mr. Dry: The first book of the *Republic* has as its conclusion Socrates's statement: I have not yet discussed what justice is.

LS: After he has proven that justice is good, he has not yet answered the question, What is justice? In other words, we leave it as a vague notion of justice without knowing precisely what it is. The same is the case here. And we must see whether in the second, larger half of the dialogue, the Callicles section, the question is raised, the question of

[xxiv] The word here is not audible.

what justice is is raised. Now this much as a survey of the first half of the *Gorgias*. There is no time left for beginning a discussion of the Callicles section, and let us see whether there are any questions you would like to raise. Yes?

Student: You spoke of this abstraction from all other goods except justice, and I also recall you remarked about the *Republic* that there was an abstraction. Is it a similar abstraction?

LS: There[77] is a kinship between the two dialogues which is in one way quite obvious—I mentioned the tripartition which is the same in the two cases, and then the obvious themes: justice is in both . . . but it is a different one. The *Republic* discusses [78]the question of what justice is by answering simultaneously the question of what the best regime is. The best regime is not the theme in the *Gorgias*. The *Gorgias* is from this point of view less political than the *Republic*, but this has more grave implications. What is the answer of the *Republic* to the questions regarding the best regime? Mr. Dry?

Mr. Dry: The best regime is one of perfect communism, with every man doing his job.

LS: Yes. But still, that's not the main point. Who rules?

Mr. Dry: That man who's most fit to rule, i.e., the philosopher.

LS: The philosopher. There is nothing of philosophers ruling in the *Gorgias*. But that has a more specific implication. Can everyone be a philosopher, according to the *Republic*? But state it positively.[79] You need a certain training, that goes without saying, but you need also a certain *nature*. A certain nature. This reflection on the nature of the philosopher is completely absent from the *Gorgias*. From the *Gorgias*, you get this impression: that it is every man's duty to philosophize.[80] In other words, a certain abstraction from human nature. And this leads to the consequence that the overall effect of the *Gorgias* is very depressing. If you make very high demands on every human being, you are bound to be greatly disappointed, you know, and therefore that is the consequence of that. I mean, this is one striking difference. One can perhaps say it as follows. You have Socrates's statement of his life, his work to the city in the *Apology*; and then you have the *Republic* [81]here at the other end. In between is the *Gorgias*. This is roughly the situation.[82] Well, Socrates says in the *Apology*, right at the beginning: I will tell you the whole truth. Yes, but that is not quite true, because Socrates does not tell the Athenians the reflections which induced him to make his defensive speech and to make it in this particular form. This reasoning preceding the *Apology* is given in the *Gorgias*, and there Socrates says his position, when a man like himself would have to defend himself before the city, would be that of a [83]physician who is accused by a pastry cook before a tribunal of children, [84][a physician] who always has bitter pills and not the sweets. And he would of course be condemned. But Socrates cannot, as a defendant, say to the Athenians: I regard you as children. Can he do that? It would be improper, contempt of court, or what have you. [85]If you read the *Apology* in a two-dimensional way, like a newspaper article, or a textbook, or what have you, then you'll never get the background. By "background" I do not mean that his mother was a midwife, and this kind of

background—a human interest story. [Laughter] The background is what is going on in the soul of the speaker and what does not come out, cannot come out, in the speech. To some extent this third dimension of the *Apology* is supplied in the *Gorgias*. But it is still given here in a way which is relatively popular in this sense: that it starts from the premise more acceptable to the *dēmos* that what Socrates does, his way of life, is a way of life which everyone could and should live.[86] The *Gorgias* is very important for the popular view [of Socrates] now prevailing and has prevailed for some time,[87] and which I'll caricature as follows: Socrates is a kind of Uncle Sam, pointing his finger at you—you remember the wartime posters? You are too young for that—pointing his finger and saying [to this youth]: Do your philosophizing today! [Laughter] Or buttonholing every person in the street: What is virtue? [Laughter] This is of course a sheer caricature of Socrates. He knew quite well that you could not bring men even to ordinary justice by this kind of procedure. But one can say these three dialogues, the *Apology*, the *Gorgias*, and the *Republic* belong together from this point of view. The *Republic* makes it clear that philosophizing can be only the work of a small minority, and therefore there is necessarily a conflict, not necessarily leading to slaughter, but a tension, let me say, between the city and philosophy. This conflict does not as such come out in the *Apology* or in the *Gorgias*. In the *Gorgias*, the conflict is presented as a factual one but not as an essential one, meaning this: Socrates suggests vaguely that in the good old times, before FDR, before Pericles, things were reasonably all right in Athens. I say the time of . . . the Revolutionary War in this country, the Founding—everything was fine. And you know that there is no fundamental conflict, only a factual conflict. I will speak of that in the Callicles section. Yes?

Student: When you mentioned the irrationality of punishment, I couldn't help thinking of Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*, in which the only way for him to be or to exist was to willfully accept punishment because of his crime. This was sensible and rational for him to do this, or else his soul dried up and became nothing. So I wondered also if it would not be rational, then, if one's soul commits a wrong act to accept the punishment, even seek out the punishment.

LS: Yes, this would be, I think, in accordance with what Socrates says. But take a man who is not yet convinced that he acted unjustly. Raskolnikov has come to repent and to see that he acted wrongly, and then he felt he could not get rid of this disfigurement of his soul, as you call it, except by some remedial action. But most criminals—or at least many, let me say[88]—have not reached that stage. Will they by mere flogging, imprisonment, or the prospect of the hot seat come to see that this was wrong? That is the question.

Same Student: Probably not.

LS: Yes, but this is the question with which we are concerned.[89] In other words, the true conversion of Raskolnikov precedes the punishment; it is not brought about by the punishment.

Same Student: Is not what?

LS: Is not brought about by the punishment—the conversion, the insight. The question is whether punishment as such produces insight.

Student: Would you say that[90] [it would] be possible for any man to really get in touch with his soul, with all the big words—justice, love, God, and so forth—without undergoing great suffering and great punishment?

LS: But that is a long question.[91] There[92] is a famous saying of Aeschylus, the tragic poet, where he identifies suffering, in Greek *pathos*, with *mathos*, with learning—*pathos*, *mathos*. . . .[xxv] But whether this is in agreement with what the philosophers teach, Plato and Aristotle, is a long question. For example, in the case of Socrates, is there any emphasis on his suffering as the condition of his becoming a thoroughly decent man?[93] There is a formula there which needs interpretation . . . still, as a formula it is known to everyone. Socrates has in himself what he calls a daemonic thing which guides him. This[94] belongs to him and was always in him,[95] a peculiar gift to him: [96]this, not suffering, made him what he was.[97] What has frequently been attacked by people coming from the biblical tradition as a certain superficiality of the Greeks, and especially of the Greek philosophers, has something to do with what you said. Do you see that point?[98] Strange as it may sound, Nietzsche above all attacked the Greeks as superficial in their psychology because of this seeming optimism which they had. That is a great question. And it is very good you brought it up.[99]

Let me say one word in conclusion.[100] I [have] asked you to have some patience because I have to bring in certain things which seem to be merely funny and curious without having any importance. Yet one must be patient; these things are important, but they reveal their meaning only in the larger context. And in addition, you must not forget that I did this survey of the *Gorgias* only in order to have a minimum preparation, a better minimum preparation for the study of the *Protagoras* than we otherwise would have. And the *Protagoras* we will start from scratch and go, proceed by short speeches, reading each sentence.

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[1] Deleted "I have –."
[2] Deleted "you know."
[3] Deleted "cooking."
[4] Deleted "There is another seat here."
[5] Deleted "the dialogue *Gorgias* is."
[6] Deleted "there is."
[7] Deleted "on."
[8] Deteted "hears, when he."
[9] Deleted "to."
[10] Deleted "sake." Perhaps in saying "is the sake of rhetoric" LS was thinking of the German *Sache*.
[11] Deleted "in other words."
[12] Deleted "because."
[13] Deleted "Now there... it is perfectly…."
[14] Deleted "I mean, I."
[15] Deleted "are."

[xxv] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 176-78.

[16] Deleted “in.”
[17] Deleted “the…the.”
[18] Deleted “showing…by.”
[19] Deleted “speak….”
[20] Deleted “Socrates does.”
[21] Deleted “is.”
[22] Deleted “Since there is such a…or.”
[23] Deleted “argues.”
[24] Deleted “my.”
[25] Moved “in this country.” Deleted “one could perhaps.”
[26] Deleted “…the.”
[27] Deleted “the.”
[28] Deleted “The implication of that – and.”
[29] Deleted “And in her per….”
[30] Moved “these.”
[31] Deleted “The next thing, Gorgias is friend –.”
[32] Deleted “Rhetoric may be”
[33] Deleted “O.K.”
[34] Deleted “So. Now we have then here this.”
[35] Deleted “But… and this is.”
[36] Deleted “says,”
[37] Deleted “indicate.”
[38] Deleted “and so.”
[39] Deleted “he has tried.”
[41] Deleted “a.”
[42] Deleted “these.”
[43] Deleted “in.”
[44] Moved “or even lower than”
[45] Deleted “Now.”
[46] Deleted “the tyrants, that.”
[47] Deleted “of”
[48] Deleted “very… a.”
[49] Deleted “what.”
[50] Deleted “Now, and.”
[51] Deleted “which.”
[52] Deleted “Now Socrates….”
[53] Deleted “when an you address.”
[54] Deleted “There is a.”
[55] Deleted “And under no circumstances…and rather than.”
[56] Deleted “The power of.”
[57] Deleted “justice is worse.”
[58] Deleted “than doing injustice.”
[59] Deleted “means here this.”
[60] Deleted “it.”
[61] Deleted “but.”
[62] Deleted “I can’t.”
[63] Deleted “it.”
[64] Deleted “also.”
[65] Deleted “is less.”
[66] Deleted “Now where did I go? Yes.”
[67] Deleted “He has.”
[68] Deleted “Socrates.”
[69] Deleted “punishment.”
[70] Deleted “in other words.”
[71] Deleted “he.”
[72] Deleted “simply like going….”

[73] Deleted “They….”
[74] Deleted “made….”
[75] Deleted “Rhetoric, no.”
[76] Deleted “That would.”
[77] Deleted “is some; I mean there.”
[78] Deleted “in that way, that it answers”
[79] Deleted “Certain…I mean.”
[80] Deleted “And….”
[81] Deleted “is.”
[82] Deleted “The Gorgias contains….”
[83] Deleted “pastry cook who is accused…no, I am sorry, a.”
[84] Deleted “that the has.”
[85] Deleted “And therefore, this…in other words, the whole… you can.”
[86] Deleted “As if it were to….”
[87] Moved “of Socrates”
[88] Deleted “do not….”
[89] Deleted “I mean the question is not.”
[90] Deleted “Would it.”
[91] Deleted “I mean.”
[92] Deleted “were… there.”
[93] Deleted “The formula… I mean.”
[94] Deleted “has… this.”
[95] Deleted “There is no reference to… I mean, in other words.”
[96] Deleted “say.”
[97] Deleted “And that is… one can, I mean.”
[98] Deleted “And.”
[99] Deleted “I do not….”
[100] Moved “have.” Deleted “I.”

Session 2: March 31, 1965

Callicles's Challenge to Socrates in the *Gorgias*

Leo Strauss: [1]I tried to explain last time that the *Gorgias* presents a rhetorical discussion of rhetoric. Gorgias is the master of rhetoricians. Rhetoric and Gorgias's view of rhetoric do not come to sight owing to the handicaps from which he suffers—he is still tired, and so on—but these handicaps were arranged by Plato. Why does Plato not wish to bring out Gorgias's rhetoric and his view of rhetoric? This is a question. Plato does bring out Socrates's view of rhetoric, as well as Socrates's rhetorical practice. We do not know, however, how Socrates's view of rhetoric would have to be revised in the light of Gorgias's view, which is unknown. Plato makes invisible something of importance. He abstracts from it. We have to find out from what he abstracts and why he does this. In other words, Plato demands critical readers. He knows of course that not all readers are critical and can be critical. Those who cannot be critical will simply accept or reject what Socrates says. Plato makes us realize what one can call the stratification of the readers or, to use a vaguer term, the variety of human beings. This knowledge, practical knowledge, is called psychology. Psychology is already a Greek word, *psychologia*, and it is connected in Plato with something else which he calls *psychagōgia*, guiding of the souls. Now this knowledge of the soul or of the souls and their guidance is the basis of the political art, contrary to the view which Socrates suggests in the *Gorgias*, that the fundamental part of the political art is the legislative art. The legislative art itself must ultimately be based on knowledge of the variety of souls. It must be based on psychology or, in order to avoid some misunderstandings, let us say *psychologia*, lest we mistake it for what is now academic psychology.

Socrates's explicit view of rhetoric is to the effect that rhetoric is a kind of flattery, a sham, a sham imitation of punitive justice, punitive justice being understood as the art of restoring the health of the soul. This view of rhetoric is based on the premise that suffering injustice is better than doing injustice, whereas rhetoric itself is based on the view that suffering injustice is worse than doing injustice. Now Socrates argues this matter out with Polus, as we have seen, and after he has refuted Polus he says that rhetoric is good only for self-accusation—in other words, for your own improved liberation from injustice, which implies of course that rhetoric is not simply flattery if can have such a good effect.[2] Socrates also forces us to raise the question which he does not bring up here: Why should rhetoric[3] not be used for just self-defense, which after all would seem to be a legitimate purpose? The answer to this question is this: Socrates is concerned only with justice—i.e., with one's being just, and not with the other goods like life, freedom, fame, and so on. He abstracts from that. The very distinction between flattery and art is based on the fundamental distinction between the pleasant and the good in such a way that the art, rational procedure, can never have anything to do with the promotion of pleasure. We can also say [that] what is effective here is an abstraction from pleasure.

Polus is refuted in[4] [the] sense that he is shown to contradict himself. His self-contradiction is of importance because it is a typical one. Ordinarily men cannot make up their minds as to what is the greatest good: justice or life, freedom, wealth, and fame. Commonsensically we would of course say both are goods, but the question is: Which has the right of way in a case of conflict? Which is the greatest good? And most human beings would of course say, if they are not compelled to choose, justice is the highest good. But if they are compelled to choose, they might prefer life, liberty and so on to justice. However this may be, Polus's refutation by Socrates is not a proof of the view that justice is the highest good; it is merely a proof that Polus contradicts himself. Socrates, however, claims that the refutation of Polus is a proof of the view that justice is the highest good. This is unsatisfactory and therefore the true discussion begins only at this moment and at that moment, namely, when Callicles enters in the third part which is more than the second half of the dialogue. Now let us see[5] how Callicles enters.[6]

Mr. Reinken:[i]
Call.: Socrates, you seem to me to be going mad with eloquence— (482c)[ii]

LS:[7] Let me say a few more words before we come to that. Now Callicles is completely bewildered. Does Socrates mean what he says? Can he mean what he says? For if Socrates were serious, our whole way of life would be completely wrong (481c). Callicles grasps the bearing of Socrates's assertion, which Polus didn't grasp because he was in the midst of the argument. Callicles is more open-minded than Polus. And connected with this, the question concerns now no longer merely rhetoric but our whole life. He is more serious than Polus and Gorgias. We can say he is not lukewarm, just as Socrates is not lukewarm. Socrates and Callicles share something which they do not share with Polus and Gorgias. Now what is that? Now let us begin at this long speech of Socrates in 481c.

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: Callicles, if human beings did not have certain feelings in common (though they may vary a bit from man to man), if each of us had merely his own private sensations unshared by the rest, it would not be easy to demonstrate to another what one feels.

LS: Yes, "to show"; "demonstrate" is perhaps too technical a meaning. To reveal to the other one's own feeling. In other words, Socrates does not suggest a doctrine of empathy in passing. The question "How do we understand other human beings?" [is] a great question in modern times, and the most common answer is: empathy. This is tacitly rejected by Socrates. We understand each other because of a fundamental identity of our natures, and then how do we find out? Well, we talk. We talk with other human beings and then we see [both] how much we have in common and also what the differences are.[8] Now what is the meaning, the purpose of[9] the general remark here? Yes?

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[i] Donald Reinken served as reader in many of Strauss's courses.
[ii] The translation assigned for the course was Plato, *Gorgias*, trans.W. C. Helmbold (Indianapolis, IN: Library of Liberal Arts/Bobbs-Merrill, 1952).

Mr. Reinken:
I state this with reference to the fact that at the moment you and I are both experiencing somewhat the same emotion and each of us has two objects of his love: I, Alcibiades, the son of Cleinias, and philosophy; you, the Athenian Demos and the son of Pyrilampes. (481d)

LS: Well, this is a little joke. The son of Pyrilampes had the name *Dēmos*, just as the *dēmos*. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Now I have noticed that in each instance, whatever your favorite says, however his opinions may go, for all your cleverness you are unable to contradict him, but constantly shift back and forth at his whim. If you are making a speech in the Assembly and the Athenian Demos disagrees, you change and say what it desires; and in the presence of this beautiful young son of Pyrilampes your experience is precisely similar. (481d-e)

LS: Yes. Now what is the *pathos*—the experience, the feeling—which Socrates and Callicles share and which by implication Gorgias and Polus do not share? It is called *erōs*.[10] Where we would speak of [a] peculiar seriousness, of dedication, Socrates speaks of *erōs*. He means something different, probably different from what we ordinarily mean by *erōs*, but that a seriousness, possibly a deadly seriousness, can go with *erōs* is I think still remembered in our time. At any rate, it's surely not something lukewarm. But as Socrates makes clear immediately, while they share this *erōs*, they love different things: different youths and different matters, affairs. Socrates loves philosophy and Callicles loves the Athenian *dēmos*. It seems that the two things are mutually exclusive.[11] One must note that he says Callicles loves the Athenian *dēmos*; he doesn't say that Callicles loves democracy. That's very important. He loves the *Athenian dēmos*, this particular *dēmos* here.

Now hitherto we have seen Socrates as a lover of justice, and what is implied here is that the love of justice becomes necessarily philosophy, love of wisdom. Now what about the alternative? Love of injustice leads to love of the Athenian *dēmos*. That is not quite clear;[12] there is some link missing. Love of injustice leads to love of some particular being like the *dēmos*. Well, the link is very simple: right or wrong, my country. If you take ordinary selfishness, how it leads to injustice, that is easy to see; but if you replace simple selfishness by collective selfishness, then it is no longer so clearly visible, because then you can say you dedicate yourself to something greater than you[rself]. But the question is whether that is sufficient, whether the principle "Right or wrong my community, my country," is sufficient. Now Socrates claims here, in other words, that his procedure, his preceding argument was philosophic. Callicles, however, denies this. Now let us turn to Callicles's speech, leaving out the end.

Mr. Reinken:
Call.: Socrates, you seem to me to be going mad with eloquence, like a true politician! And now you are prattling this way because Polus has fallen victim to the very treatment which he accused Gorgias of having received at your hands. For he said, I believe, that

when Gorgias was questioned by you as to whether, when anyone came to him desiring to learn rhetoric without a knowledge of justice, Gorgias grew ashamed and said he would teach him, complying with conventional morality, because people might— (482c-d)

LS: Literally, "because of the custom of human beings." There is no word for morality in Greek.

Mr. Reinken:
because of the custom of human beings because people might grow indignant if he said he wouldn't; and it was through this very admission that he was forced to contradict himself, which is exactly what you are so fond of. On this occasion Polus was laughing at you, and rightly, too, as I think: but now, in his turn, he has suffered this same fate. From my point of view, what I cannot approve of in Polus' performance is precisely this: he conceded to you that doing wrong is uglier than suffering it, and it was from this concession that he got completely tangled up in the argument and, being ashamed to say what he really thought, had his mouth gagged. Now, Socrates, you know you really do divert the argument into such cheap and vulgar paths, saying that you're pursuing the truth, but really getting us into what is beautiful, not by nature but by convention. Yet these two are for the most part opposed to each other, nature and convention; so that if a man is timid and doesn't have the courage to speak his mind, he must necessarily contradict himself. (482d-483a)

LS: Let us stop for one moment then. Now Socrates had claimed that his procedure was philosophic. Callicles denies this. Socrates's procedure was vulgarly rhetorical. That is the point: the rhetorical trick consisted [of] Socrates simply[13] exploit[ing] Gorgias's fear of popular disapproval, and Polus's too; or in other words, he exploited their sense of shame. Socrates acted as a vulgar rhetorician by arguing on the basis of convention as distinguished from nature. And then[14] [Callicles] develops his own thesis[15] at some length in the immediate—let us read only a few more sentences, where you left off.

Mr. Reinken:
So this is the clever trick you have devised to cheat in your arguments: if a man makes his assertions according to convention, in your questions you slyly substitute "according to nature," and if he speaks according to nature, you reply according to convention. So in the present instance, when doing and suffering wrong were being examined, Polus spoke of what was uglier according to convention, but you followed it up as though it were a natural principle. By nature, in fact, everything that is worse is uglier, just as suffering wrong is; but to do wrong is uglier merely by convention. For to suffer wrong is not the part of a man at all, but that of a slave for whom it is better to be dead than alive, as it is for anyone who is unable to come either to his own assistance when he is wronged or mistreated or to that of anyone he cares about. I can quite imagine that the manufacturers of laws and conventions are the weak, the majority, in fact. (483a-b)

LS: Let us stop here. The words which he uses are these: "It is not a matter of a man," in Greek, *anēr*. The nearest modern equivalent of which I know is *hombre.* [Laughter] It is

not English, but intelligible. And the word we use, *anthrōpos*—from which anthropology, etc. are derived—means "human being" and has a lower sense in Greek. I mean, an *anthrōpos* is a human being who is not an *hombre*, for example, a slave or some low-class man. Now let us then see what he says.

Suffering injustice is better than doing injustice. This assertion is merely the assertion of the *nomos*, of convention. According to nature, the opposite is true. Doing injustice is by nature both better and nobler than suffering injustice. But not all men are capable of living in accordance with nature. Only *hombres* can, in contradistinction to the weak and many human beings. And the *nomos*, the convention, is the work of the many weaklings, and he develops that in the sequel. They set up equality in contradistinction to having more as the norm, and they do it for a very good reason, as far as they are concerned, because for them equality is an improvement, and naturally because they are no longer exposed to the greater power and cleverness of superior men. This right of the stronger is a right of nature, even the *law* of nature. That is the first time the word "the law of nature" occurs, and it is here used paradoxically because nature and law are antithetic to each other. How can there be a law of nature? The meaning here is that Callicles is so much [under the spell of political conventions] without knowing it [16] that he cannot conceive of the right of nature, except in some legal terms: the law of nature. This explanation[17] [doesn't] explain the other use of the term "law of nature" in Plato, which is in the *Timaeus*, but we are not now concerned with this. Natural right surpasses conventional right by its splendor, and this splendor is due to that of the superior man. And this is developed with great force by Callicles in the sequel.

Now this passage has reminded modern readers of some remarks of Nietzsche about the superior man, but there is very little in common between Callicles and Nietzsche, and the very simple reason is that Callicles is, as all Greeks were, a eudaemonist, and Nietzsche opposes eudaemonism. Is the term "eudaemonism" intelligible, or should I explain it? *Eudaimonia* is the Greek word for happiness, one of the words for happiness or bliss, and the whole traditional moral teaching was based on the notion of happiness or bliss, whether of this world or the next was a secondary question. But the key point was that for man the highest good is happiness. And the primacy of happiness was rejected on principle by Kant;[18] especially German moral thought of the nineteenth century, including Nietzsche, is based on a rejection of happiness as a principle.[19] Therefore[20] it is misleading to compare this to Nietzsche.

Now up to this point, which is 484c, Callicles had spoken as a philosopher against the vulgar orator Socrates, who switches back and forth as it suits him between nature and convention. Now he makes another objection to Socrates.[21] He attacks Socrates precisely because he is a philosopher, [at] 484c4. In other words, after having stated his view of the true right or law of nature, he says:

Mr. Reinken:
Here, then, you have the truth of the matter. You will become convinced of it if you only let philosophy alone and pass on to more important considerations. Of course, Socrates, philosophy does have a certain charm if one engages with it in one's youth and in

moderation; but it if one dallies overlong, it's the ruin of a fellow. If a man, however well-endowed, goes on philosophizing throughout his life, he will never come to taste the experiences which a man must have if he's going to be a gentleman and have the world to look up to him.

LS: Well, again: *anēr, hombre,* yes.

Mr. Reinken:
You know perfectly well that philosophers know nothing about state laws and regulations. They are equally ignorant of the conversational standards that we have to adopt in dealing with our fellow men at home and abroad. Why, they are inexperienced even in human pleasures and desires! In a word, they are totally innocent of all human character. So—

LS: Yes. In other words, they[22] lack that *psychologia*, that psychology which is absolutely necessary for politics but also, as we have seen, for philosophy. Now he compares[23] [people who practice philosophy and] are no longer adolescents to someone who still uses baby talk or such things after he has become mature,[24] [which] is of course a disgraceful and ridiculous thing. He speaks of lisping here. This is probably an allusion to Alcibiades, who was famous for his lisp. So to repeat, after Callicles has spoken as a philosopher against the vulgar orator Socrates, he accuses Socrates of being *merely* a philosopher, of not having transcended philosophy. Philosophy is all right for adolescents, but in order to become a mature *hombre,* one must acquire experience of the major things, of the political and human things, which Socrates completely lacks, and therefore Socrates becomes ridiculous. He even deserves to be spanked, as it may seem. Socrates's whole way of life is the wrong one, for it is altogether unmanly. Socrates and his like are unable to defend [themselves or preserve] themselves,[25] and they become the victims of every despicable accuser. They are in a disgraceful situation.

Now[26] Callicles's position is not only forcefully and beautifully stated; it has also a certain strength. He takes up the point which was unreasonably neglected by Socrates, which is the question of legitimate self-defense. But how does it come that he is led away from this sober point that a just man should be able to defend himself by speech if he is accused by an unjust man? How does he come from this perfectly reasonable and decent view to his praise of injustice? That we must understand. What follows, if you start from the view that the chief consideration is self-preservation?

Mr. Shulsky: Well, later on Socrates asks him: When you talk about preserving yourself and not being attacked, do you mean to do this by getting as much power as possible by becoming the [powerful] tyrant of the city or being friendly with the tyrant or who—

LS: Yes. But still,[27] have we not read occasionally the man,[28] the nerve of whose thought is exactly this point, the consequence of the right of self-preservation?[29] I mean Hobbes, of course. What follows according to Hobbes from the right of self-preservation taken by itself?

Mr. Reinken: On the cold level of the argument he says you can't be quite sure; you need everything. But[30] you made the point that he's got something more than just self-preservation in mind, that people want to not merely to preserve themselves but, like Callicles, to live gloriously.

LS: Yes, but in order to understand Callicles we have to experiment with things which Callicles has perhaps never understood, and there Hobbes comes in as a great help, I believe, because Hobbes's point is exactly[31] that the right to self-preservation taken by itself necessarily leads to the right to everything, and what else is injustice but to claim the right to everything? I'm not now concerned how Hobbes goes on from here, but this part of Hobbes's argument[32] of course would help us. This is quite true. Now you made another point, Mr. Reinken. What did you say about what Callicles is concerned with[33] apart from mere self-preservation?

Mr. Reinken: Well, I called it living gloriously: he has[34] pride.

LS: Yes, here there is something of that, but we can also see that in a very strange way that does not come out. That is,[35] when he makes his initial speech one has this impression, but[36] we must drop that. I repeat that Callicles's initial attack on Socrates consists of two parts: first an attack on justice in the name of philosophy, in the name of nature; and then an attack on philosophy.[37] The justification is that for Socrates justice is identical with philosophy. A questionable justification, but [one that holds] to some extent. Now before discussing Callicles's thesis, Socrates[38] states in a general way the conditions which must be fulfilled in a good discussion which leads to the truth. That is at the end of 486.

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: If my soul happened to be golden, Callicles, don't you think I should be overjoyed to find a stone to test the metal, the best stone possible, which, when I applied it, if it agreed that my soul had been well cared for, then I would know that I was in a satisfactory state and never needed another touchstone?
Call.: What is the motive behind this question, Socrates?
Soc.: I shall tell you. I think, now that I've met you, I've met just such a lucky stone.
Call.: How so?
Soc.: Because I am convinced that whenever you agree with me about any opinion my soul proposes, then it must be the whole truth. It is my belief that a man who is going to test his soul on the correctness (or the reverse) of its life must have three qualities: knowledge, good will, and candor. You have them all. (486d-487a)

LS: "Good will"; "benevolence" would be a more literal translation, meaning benevolence to the man to whom he speaks or may examine. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
I run into many people unable to test me because they are not wise, as you are; others have wisdom, but won't tell me the truth because they don't care for me, as you do; and

your two guests there, Gorgias and Polus, are both wise men and friends of mine, but they are somewhat deficient in candor and more modest than they should be. (487a-b)

LS: [39]Have a great[er] sense of shame than they should have. [40]The implication is [that] Callicles has fulfilled these three conditions, and if they agree, then the thing is settled. But no such agreement could be expected in the cases of Gorgias and Polus, and therefore the previous sections are not sufficient for bringing out the truth, and in particular the truth about the soul of Socrates. The participants must be wise, benevolent to each other, and frank. These conditions are allegedly fulfilled in the Callicles section. Now everyone would admit, I believe, that this is an ironical remark, and surely regarding Callicles's wisdom. There is of course and always this great question: How do you know that it is ironical?[41] We would have to prove that.[42] I would venture to say that what happens to Callicles in the sequel would show that he is not, in any strict sense of the word, wise.

Now the consequence of course is that the conditions required for a settlement of that issue are not fulfilled in the whole dialogue. They are admittedly not fulfilled in the preceding part; they are in fact not fulfilled in the Callicles part. This remark here reminds of one which Socrates makes in the *Republic*: One can say the truth which one knows to reasonable friends. Of course it is of no use if you say, "I tell the truth and I will tell the whole truth" if you don't know it. Then you can at best say, "I will say what I *believe* is the truth. Let us disregard this unpleasant difficulty." But[43] furthermore, one can say it only to friends, to people who would not use what one says against one; and in addition, they must be reasonable men. They must be able to understand. But this implies, although it is not said here,[44] that one[45] can say the truth that one knows only among reasonable friends, because clearly if[46] a wise man speaks to another wise man and an unwise man is present, God knows what this unwise man will do with what[47] [was] said. This is of course of importance for all Platonic dialogues, this remark, not only for the *Gorgias*, as you can easily see.

Now Callicles had asserted that the better or stronger should have more than the worse or weaker. But this is not very precise. Is better and stronger the same, or do they differ? Callicles says first[48] [that] they are identical, and then Socrates easily kills this view because the many weaklings together are by nature stronger than the few best and even the few strongest. Now if this is so, that the multitude is stronger than the individual, however strong and so on, then it follows that the laws, which are admittedly made by the many, are by nature just because they are the product of strength, which is the sole principle of natural right according to Callicles. But the many say, of course, equal rights for all is justice; hence this is natural right. What can you do? If the best is the same as the strongest, then the multitude always wins. Is this clear?[49] Even in the modern democratic argument, this question of the sheer power of the multitude as an argument in favor of democracy is frequently noticeable. It is still remembered in the remark about ballots replacing bullets,[iii] you know, where the reference to the question of power is still there. Also in Locke's argument about the right of the majority:[50] On what is the right of

[iii] One of the most well-known speeches of the Black nationalist leader Malcolm X is "The Ballot or the Bullet." The speech was delivered in Detroit in April 1964.

the majority grounded? Fundamentally, on the greater power of the majority. This in passing.

Callicles is then refuted in this first round. He therefore retracts his identification of the better and the stronger. He says now that the better ones are the more *sensible* ones. The more sensible ones should rule the others and have more than the others according to natural right. Here the question is not that the more sensible ones should rule the less sensible ones—this makes sense—but why should they have more? Why? And what does this mean? Must they have, perhaps, such special houses so that they don't hear too much noise and can work out measures for the benefit of the people and are not disturbed by TV and so on? [Laughter] Or[51] must they have more food and drink than the others, and also clothes, of course? What does "having more" mean? Callicles becomes indignant. By "the better men" he understood not only the more reasonable ones but also the manly ones. Manly has then the meaning also of courageous, of course. So in other words, Callicles doesn't answer the question yet [of][52] what [they] should they have more. Socrates leads him on by asking him whether the natural[53] rulers must not also rule themselves, whether they must not also control their desires. In other words, whether apart from being manly, they must not also be moderate, or temperate. And the Greek word for the virtue is *sōphrosynē*, which plays a very great role in [LS writes on the blackboard]—it has a very narrow meaning, for example, in Aristotle's *Ethics*, where it simply means temperance regarding food, drink, and so on. But that is a very narrow meaning. But it can have a very large meaning when it is understood [54]in opposition to madness, for example, *mania*.[55] Then it means something like sanity, sobriety. It can also be understood in opposition to *hybris*, insolent pride. Then it also means something like[56] sanity. But it is very common to use it in conjunction with, in distinction from, and therefore in possible opposition to manliness. For example, in the first book of Plato's *Laws* there is a long discussion of the relation of these two virtues.

So Socrates asks them: Must these better men not also be moderate? Callicles simply denies this, [that these better men must also be moderate]. The better men are those who can indulge all their desires, all their maximum desires. This is developed again with great force by Callicles. Now what does this mean? Callicles did not say this spontaneously, mind you, because what Callicles would have said spontaneously, not egged on by Socrates, we have to figure out; we do not know this directly. Socrates pushes him into that direction so that the subject is no longer justice strictly understood, the relation to our fellow men, but moderation. Now moderation is self-control. What did you say before, Mr. Reinken, about what Callicles is concerned with?

Mr. Reinken: I claimed that he had that jet of appetite.

LS: For what?[57]

Mr. Reinken: For more, and for a glorious more. Not only [not-]shoddy, but silks.

LS: Yes, but still let us avoid metaphor for the time being. We aren't prepared for that. Or if you please, replace your metaphor by a nonmetaphorical expression. What do you

mean? What is this thing with which he is concerned? You spoke of it before. You mentioned the word: something like glory. But that is very remarkable that he creates the impression[58] [that] he was chiefly concerned with glory, but[59] when the argument comes . . . it seems to be only something like the satisfaction of the bodily desires. That is remarkable, that the question of honor and prestige or however you call it plays a very small role. Now whether[60] Callicles is not very much concerned with it, or whether Socrates manages the discussion so that this seems to be the case, that is a long question. We can perhaps[61] later on find out the reason.

Now first of all,[62] why can one try to substitute moderation and self-control for justice? Well, in the first place, a man of self-control, a man with limited desires—say, for possessions especially—is very likely not to interfere with other people's rights, so that from this point of view the self-controlled man will as a consequence be more or less just. The other relation however is this, and here is the fundamental difference between moderation or self-control and justice: what Socrates asserts is that justice is good, good for the just man, and that means that injustice is bad for him. But if we take a very strict view and bust the case wide open: Is injustice simply bad, I mean on the lowest level? On the lowest level. Some of you may remember the discussion of this subject in the second book of Plato's *Republic*, where Glaucon, a believer in justice, states the case for injustice in order to be refuted by Socrates. What does Glaucon say? Is injustice bad?

Mr. Dry: It's the appearance that's bad. . . .

LS: Yes.[63] So injustice is punished only when detected; and also justice is rewarded by praise or by respect only if it is known. And therefore it is possible that a perfectly just man may be regarded as unjust and suffer a terrible fate, whereas a very unjust man who appears to be perfectly just becomes a pillar of society and is honored and respected by everyone. This is a great difficulty which Glaucon presents there. Now what about self-control? Again, on the simplest and lowest level, if someone eats too much, what is the consequence of that? Well, he will be punished for it, regardless of whether anyone sees it or not.[64] In strictest privacy, he will have stomach troubles and so on. [Laughter] So in other words, it is much easier to prove that self-control or temperance is good than to prove that justice is good. Self-control is *naturally* good, whereas it is a question whether justice is naturally good.

Callicles does not bring out, as we have stated before, the importance to people like him or apparently like him of honor and glory.[65] We can again use a simple formula: somehow in this dialogue abstraction is made from honor or glory. But why is that done? [66]Honor depends on service, true or presumed. People are honored—think of the astronauts, or think of the president of the United States, [67][whomever] you take—honor is meant to be a reward for service. Service means, of course, serving others. But Callicles is concerned with ruling only for his own benefit, and he is not willing to make this concession that[68] in order to get what he wants he should serve others. This is characteristic of him. So in other words, if a man is concerned with honor, prestige, distinction and so, he is more amenable in principle to concern with justice than if not concerned with that.

But let us pursue the argument. Callicles rejects moderation or self-control with contempt as sheer stupidity, and he defends dissoluteness, which he identifies with freedom. We can say he mistakes license for freedom. The many blame dissoluteness or license. Well, the reason is clear: sour grapes. They don't have the ability to get all these pleasant things. If anything is natural, our desires are. And that desires are natural can easily be proven, because we desire without being told to desire. I mean, there is of course also a sham desire that people desire because[69] it is the fashion of society to do it. We know that. But our true desires are in us without being told to desire and also without being coerced to desire. In this double sense desires are natural. Hence the satisfaction of desires is in accordance with nature. The question of how one should live, as now explicitly stated, is reduced to this alternative: moderation or dissoluteness. In other words, self-sufficiency, to need nothing, versus infinite needs, because if you[70] must satisfy maximum desire, you are infinitely in need.

Now Socrates tries to persuade Callicles by telling him something which he has heard from a wise man who was telling myths and, according to that view, what we call life is in fact death, or another expression from the same school—in Greek it is a pun: *sōma sēma*. The body is a tomb. The body is a tomb. Now if this is so, if what we call life is in fact death, then it follows that the desire for self-preservation is absurd; it means only to prefer death to life. Hence of course forensic rhetoric used for self-defense would be absurd. Now this use of myth or of image is a kind of rhetoric, but obviously a good kind of rhetoric. From this it follows that rhetoric is not simply flattery, as Socrates had asserted. Socrates tacitly, but only tacitly, retracts here his wholesale condemnation of rhetoric. There is a kind of rhetoric which leads the soul to health and happiness. But this is here only an inference yet; it will take some time until Socrates will say it explicitly.

Callicles is not persuaded by these images. He says without needs, i.e., without desires and their satisfaction, [there is] no pleasure. All satisfaction of desires is pleasant. And therefore all the other consequences which he had stated [follow]. Socrates says: Look at another case. What about a man who has an itch and desires to scratch, and scratches to his satisfaction? Well, that is also good, isn't it? Callicles regards this question again as vulgarly rhetorical but admits that a man who scratches himself will spend a pleasant, happy life. And now Socrates takes a further step: What about the life of catamites? Now Callicles is shocked. There are things which he would be ashamed to do and of which he would even be ashamed to speak. In other words, he is not as frank as he claimed to be. He suffers, therefore, a disgraceful defeat, for contempt of convention is his standard. But he does not give up his main thesis, which is that the good is identical with the pleasant, for this very interesting reason. In his view, it is disgraceful to abandon one's thesis: a brave man does not leave his post. But contradicting oneself is of course not disgraceful. In a word, Callicles cannot be reached by *logos*, by argument, because of his manliness.[71] Well, the simplest example of course is [that] you just don't listen to what the other fellow says, and then you can never be refuted by him. Now then Socrates makes him agree that knowledge is something different from courage and that both knowledge and courage differ from pleasure. Yet Callicles still maintains that the good is identical with the pleasant. And here is where Socrates's argument turns this around. What Socrates is

trying to show is that by asserting that the good is identical with the pleasant and yet that reasonableness, intelligence, understanding, manliness, and so on are good, he contradicts himself. Is this necessarily a contradiction? I mean, could a hedonist, a man who asserts that the good is identical with the pleasant, not maintain the value of courage or knowledge, although he admits that they are not in themselves pleasant? Yes?

Student: They could be necessary means.

LS: Exactly. So they would be not pleasant in themselves, but productive of pleasure. Now this is of great importance for our further study, because in the *Protagoras* this experiment with hedonism is made and does not fail, and so we have to keep this in mind with a view to that. Now let us then turn to 495 at the end, e2, how the refutation goes.[iv]

LS: —opposite experience, than those who are doing ill?

Mr. Reinken:[72]
Soc.: Don't you think that good and evil fortune are opposite conditions?
Call.: I do.
Soc.: Then, since these are mutually opposed, the relation between them must be the same as that between sickness and health; for obviously a man is not going to be sick and well at the same time or be simultaneously free of both health and disease.
Call.: How's that?
Soc.: Take as an illustration any part of the body you like. I suppose a man may have a disease of the eyes, called ophthalmia?
Call.: Of course.
Soc.: And while his eyes are sick they can't be well at the same time?
Call.: No, they can't; not at all.

LS: Good. Socrates enlarges, generalizes on that, that in the case of all good things, it is so that we cannot possess the specific good and its specific opposite at the same time or get rid of the specific good and its specific opposite at the same time. What about pleasure and pain? In [496]c6.

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: Then let us return to our former admissions. Did you say that hunger was pleasant or painful? By hunger, I mean the state itself.
Call.: Painful; it is, however, pleasant to eat when one is hungry.
Soc.: I understand. Yet hunger itself is painful, is it not?
Call.: I agree.
Soc.: And thirst also?
Call.: Very.
Soc.: Then must I go further with my questions or do you admit that every sort of want and desire is painful?
Call.: I admit it without further questions.

[iv] The tape was changed at this point. The tape resumes after Mr. Reinken has read the passage and Strauss is making a comment.

Soc.: Good. But you do admit, don't you, that drinking when one is thirsty is pleasant?
Call.: I do.
Soc.: And this phrase of yours "when one is thirsty" implies pain?
Call.: Yes.
Soc.: But drinking is the satisfaction of a want and is a pleasure?
Call.: Yes.
Soc.: So you affirm that pleasure is felt in the act of drinking?
Call.: Certainly.
Soc.: "When one is thirsty," at least?
Call.: I agree.
Soc.: While one feels pain?
Call.: Yes.
Soc.: Then do you see the consequence of this? You are declaring that pleasure and pain are felt at the same time when you say that a man drinks when he is thirsty. Or does this not occur at the same time or place, whether in the soul or the body, as you prefer? I fancy there is here no difference. Is this so or is it not?
Call.: It is.
Soc.: Yet you state that it is impossible for a man to fare well and ill at the same time.
Call.: Yes, and I say so again.
Soc.: But you have admitted that it is possible to feel pleasure while in pain.
Call.: It looks that way.
Soc.: Then to feel pleasure is not to fare well, nor is to feel pain to fare badly. And the result of this is that what is pleasant is different from what is good. (496c-497a)

LS: Now what is the nub of the argument? The good and its opposite cannot subsist at the same time in the same respect, but the pleasant and its opposite can subsist at the same time in the same respect.[73] You get rid of the pain of hunger and the pleasure of eating at the same time, when you have eaten enough. This is then[74] the beginning of[75] the refutation of the proof that the good is not identical with the pleasant. Now, how is Callicles's reaction? Let us read the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
Call.: I have no notion what you're quibbling about, Socrates.
Soc.: I rather think you do, Callicles; you're only pretending. But let us continue on our forward march, so that you may acquire some notion of what a clever fellow you are to take me to task. Isn't it true that in all of us both the thirst and the pleasure derived from drinking ceases simultaneously?
Call.: I have no notion what you mean, I tell you.
Gorg.: Don't say that, Callicles. (497a-b)

LS: Gorgias is speaking now, after a long time of silence here.

Mr. Reinken:
Don't say that, Callicles. Answer him for our sake, also, so we may properly come to the end of the argument. (497b) [Laughter]

LS: Well, not quite, it's "so that the speeches may find their completion." Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Call.: But Socrates is always like this, Gorgias. He keeps on asking piffling little questions until he's got you! [Laughter]
Gorg.: What's that to you? Your reputation is not at stake. Just let Socrates refute you in any way he likes. (497b)[v]

LS: Yes. Now what does this mean? Gorgias is eager to hear the sequel and Callicles obeys him. Gorgias has authority over Callicles, this much is clear. But something which is more important: the dialogue is continued for the sake of Gorgias. And there is further evidence in the sequel; I only took the first example of that. Now Socrates reminds Callicles of the fact that Callicles's whole argument is based on the distinction between superior and inferior, better and worse men. And Callicles did not mean by better men, men who have more pleasures, and [by] worse men, men who have[76] [fewer] pleasures; but the better men are those who possess or lack the ability to procure the pleasures for themselves. And then[77] in 497e following[78] he shows that especially in the case of courage and its opposite, cowardice, it is by no means true that the more courageous man has more pleasures than the cowards;[79] on the contrary, so that, in other words, a manly man, a better man is not distinguished from a worse man by having more pleasures. From Callicles's principle that the good is pleasant, cowardice would have to [be] preferred to manliness. Well, the cowards get much more excitement from life than[80] solidly and stolidly brave men, and of course therefore also more pleasant relief. I mean, a man who is constantly in fear, and many of these fears prove to be unfounded, has lots of pleasures which the courageous man lacks.

Now the self-contradiction of Callicles consists in this: If the good is identical with the pleasant, the only thing which counts is a pleasant life. Whether this pleasant life is due to one's power or ability or to mere luck or accident would not make any difference. But for Callicles it does make a difference. He[81] genuinely admires the *hombre*, and there is a contradiction between this admiration for the *hombre*—this concern with the resplendent, grand, beautiful, noble—and his hedonism. If Callicles did not have this admiration he could not be refuted; he could not be reached by *logos*, by argument. A man who knows of nothing but the satisfaction of his desire for food and drink could not be refuted. This is of some interest with a view to the present so-called social science relativism. All values are subjective: whether you take the filling of your belly or whether you take something admirable doesn't make any difference. The only question is: Can a man who truly believes this and not merely says he believes it be a social scientist? Can he understand human beings? Can he understand himself as a scientist without seeing in science, in reason, something high? And must he therefore not be open to the question whether there are not other things which are also high, namely, intrinsically superior to filling one's belly? But this only in passing. Let us turn to 499b, the speech of Callicles.

Mr. Reinken:

[v] Mr. Reinken's reading is animated, and there is laughter throughout.

Call.: It's quite a time now, Socrates, that I've been listening to you while I spoke my agreeable answers, perfectly well aware that if for a joke anyone gives you an inch, you'll seize upon it with childish glee! As if you really believed that I or anyone else in the world didn't realize that some pleasures are better and some worse! (499b)

LS: Yes. Callicles says now: Why do you take all these troubles, Socrates? It is wholly unnecessary as far as I am concerned. But why did Callicles not say so earlier and [he] would have saved the trouble? Well, on the earlier occasion he acted as a manly man: he defended his whole territory; he didn't budge. Now he abandons some territory with grace, and this is an entirely different thing. That is becoming: "You are a child, Socrates." In other words, he claims he has fooled Socrates, and that means that he has been victorious in spite of the refutation. This reveals, of course, his character. Callicles grants now that there are bad pleasures. This is of course not necessarily incompatible with hedonism, because bad pleasures can simply be pleasures which are followed by pains, and therefore the desirable pleasures are the pure pleasures, pleasures not followed by pain. That will also be discussed in the *Protagoras*.

But Socrates argues in a different way. If there are bad pleasures, hence we cannot take our bearings by the pleasant but only by the good, because the fact that something is pleasant is not a sufficient reason for choosing it because it may be a bad pleasure. Therefore, there is a radical difference between the good and the pleasant, and we have to take our bearings by the good alone.[82] Socrates develops then the consequences of this regarding rhetoric, even regarding the whole [of] life. Let us turn to 500a, the speech of Socrates.

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: Let us, then, recall my remarks to Polus and Gorgias. If you remember, I said that some activities were concerned solely with pleasure, procured this only, and paid no attention to what might be better or worse; and there were others which recognized good and evil. Among those concerned solely with pleasure I put gourmet cookery as a knack, not an art; and among those concerned with the good I set medicine as an art. And now by the love of friendship, Callicles, please don't think that you ought to play with me or that your answers should be at random or contrary to your true opinion; on the other hand, don't take what I say as a joke, either. You do see, surely, that our conversation is on the subject which should engage the most serious attention of anyone who has a particle of intelligence: in what way should one live one's life? Should it be the one to which you urge me— (500a-b)

LS: Well,[83] no more general a question and more fundamental a question for[84] man's life is thinkable: How should one live? But this question is immediately specified in so far as it is asserted that there is only one fundamental alternative. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: Should it be the one to which you urge me as being the activity which best befits a man—speaking in public, practicing rhetoric, engaging in politics in the current fashion? Or should it be this present life of mine immersed in philosophy? And what is the

difference between the two of them? Perhaps the best way to discover this is to begin with the distinction I attempted to make a little while ago: when we have made it and agreed upon the fact that these two lives are actually distinct, we must inquire what the difference is and which one of them we should choose to live. It is possible that you do not yet catch my meaning.
Call.: I certainly don't. (500c-d)

LS: Now what is the alternative as stated here? Either the present political life, which means life in a democracy, or the philosophic life. Now this clearly does not exclude the possibility that there may be another kind of political life which is compatible with philosophy. Rhetoric is presented here as belonging to the present political life, meaning[85] simply bad, as you have seen. But it is still a question whether the distinction between the two ways of[86] [life] is valid. Now the question is next presumed to have been settled in the discussion with Polus. Let us see, we come next to the key point in 501d. Socrates repeats again [that] these sham arts, the flatteries or knacks, consist in merely gratifying men instead of improving either their bodies or souls. Yes? Is this true in the case of a single soul?

Reinken: Yes.
Soc.: And does this hold for one soul only and not for two or more?
Call.: Oh no; it holds for two and for many more.
Soc.: Then is it possible to "gratify" a large crowd, all together at the same time, without taking into consideration what is best?

LS: "Without taking any consideration," would be the . . .

Mr. Reinken:
Call.: Yes, I imagine so.
Soc.: Can you tell me, then, what activities there are that indulge this practice? Or rather, if you please, when I ask you, if you think one of them belongs to this class, say so; if not, say no. First, let us think of flute-playing. Does it not seem to you, Callicles, that it seeks our pleasure only and has no other object?
Call.: Yes, I think so. (501d-e)

LS: Now then there come a number of other arts of the same kind, a kindred kind, and at the end of it, in 502b. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: And what about the effort of that stately marvel, tragic poetry? Is all her aim and concern merely to gratify the audience? Or does she also strive not to make any pronouncement which, though it may be pleasant and delightful, is also bad? Does she boldly sing out what is useful, though unpleasant, whether the audience likes it or not? Which attitude do you believe to be displayed by tragic poetry?
Call.: Why, it seems quite obvious, Socrates, that the effort is rather toward pleasure and the gratification of the spectator. (502b)

LS: [87]In other words, the case of rhetoric is in a way changed by this remark, because the status of rhetoric is apparently not different [from], not inferior to that of poetry, and even to that noble kind of poetry, tragedy. The problem of rhetoric appears now in a very different light. Of course someone can say: That's not surprising; we all have read Plato's *Republic* and the criticism of poetry there. But this is only a reference from one unknown to another, because we would have to know what this criticism means. So[88] Socrates will make clear in the sequel that tragedy is even lower than rhetoric. Now that is in 502d. Rhetoric is speaking to the people, to the *dēmos*.

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: Then poetry is a kind of public address.
Call.: So it seems.
Soc.: It should, consequently, be a rhetorical kind of public address; for you do think, do you not, that poets make use of rhetoric in their plays?
Call.: I do.
Soc.: Then we have now hit upon a kind of rhetoric addressed to a crowd of people made up of men and women and children alike, of slaves as well as free men. We are unable to adire it very much because we maintain that it is a form of flattery.
Call.: Quite.
Soc.: Good. What, then, is the nature of the rhetoric addressed to the people of Athens and of the other cities of free men? Does it seem to you that orators always speak with an eye on what is best and aim at this: that their fellow citizens may receive the maximum improvement through their words? Or do they, like the poets, strive to gratify their fellows and, in seeking their own private interest, do they neglect the common good, dealing with public assemblies as though the constituents were children, trying only to gratify them, and caring not at all whether this procedure makes them better or makes them worse? (502c-e)

LS: So tragedy, in a way the highest form of poetry, is lower than rhetoric, because tragedy is addressed to children, women, and slaves as well as to free men, whereas rhetoric addresses itself only to free men. He says here at the beginning of the passage,[89] "some kind of rhetoric." This is already a key point. There are various kinds of rhetoric. Contrast this with the blanket condemnation of rhetoric in the Polus section. And there is also a new criterion, as we have seen here: the political rhetoric gratifies the hearers for the sake of [the] private gain of the orator. One could of course wonder: Could there not be a political orator who gratifies the *dēmos* yet at the same time thinks of the common good? Why this extremism, that the pleasant and the good cannot possibly come together? Let us read the reply of Callicles, which follows immediately.

Mr. Reinken:
Call.: This question you are asking is no longer a simple one. There are, in fact, some orators who say what they say with deep concern for their fellow citizens; but there are also others such as you describe. (502e-503a)

LS: And you see [that] now Callicles is again entirely sincere because he is interested in politics. There is no question. He replies not merely for the sake of Gorgias, and he

doesn't play with Socrates. He takes the side of the decent, public-spirited orators, contrary to what he implied in his low speech regarding the true *hombre.* This is the genuine Callicles. What is behind his self-contradiction? Public-spiritedness is concern with the common good of the city of Athens ordered democratically, because that is the context in which he would work. Therefore he must have love for the Athenian *dēmos*, as Socrates says he has. Again, we must understand this in the sense of collective selfishness: right or wrong, my city.[90] Now then there is this proclivity from collective selfishness to private selfishness is understood here. In other words, someone—at first glance a patriotic, public-spirited citizen has nothing in common with a man concerned only with his private gain, but from a stricter point of view they have very much in common because they do not allow of any principle higher than selfishness, collective or private. The mere patriot in the sense of "right or wrong, my country" is a much more respectable man than the merely selfish one, but he doesn't have the root of the matter in himself; therefore this proclivity. This is beautifully developed in Thucydides, if one reads him properly: the tyrant city Athens, an imperialist city, and its connection with tyranny pure and simple. Now let us consider the sequel, where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: That's good enough. For if this matter is really two-fold, part of it will doubtless be a form of flattery and a shameless method of addressing the public; the other may well be beautiful, a genuine attempt to make the souls of one's fellows as excellent as may be, a striving always to say what is best, whatever the degree of pleasure or pain it may afford the audience. But a rhetoric such as this you have never encountered. Or, if you are able to mention such an orator, why have you not already told me his name?
Call.: Well . . . I swear I can't name a single one, at least among the orators of today.
Soc.: Are you then able to mention any of the older statesmen through the influence of whose public career the Athenians became better than they were before? (503a-b)[vi]

LS: Let us stop here. This will then be taken up later where Socrates says that these men of the past, the great men—Themistocles and Pericles, Cimon and Miltiades—were also bad and the most radical condemnation of all the glories of the city of Athens. This is here only prepared, but we must not—this is a very sensational piece in the *Gorgias*—but we must not overlook the key event which has silently taken place in 503a. Socrates admits now for the first time that there can be a rhetoric which is a genuine art, and we know already its general purpose: it must make men better, the citizen better. But he also says this noble rhetoric does not, at least not yet, exist. What is the consequence? But it is obviously possible, it seems. What must we do, if it does not yet exist?[91]

Mr. Reinken: We must make it.

LS: Yes. We must make it. Surely. And then the question: But who will make it? Who will make it? It must be a man of some great gifts, obviously, but who? Who is the most likely candidate?[92]

Student: Socrates?

[vi] Ellipses in translation.

LS: Socrates, in this case, yes. Now what must he be able to do? After all, we must see whether he can do it. How could we test Socrates's ability to produce a true and noble rhetoric? He must be able to make the Athenians, and especially of course the politically active Athenians, better. Now here in this dialogue we see him attempting to make such a man better, namely, Callicles. Polus is of no interest, because Polus is a foreigner. But Callicles is an Athenian, and what does Socrates achieve in his conversation with Callicles?

Mr. Reinken: Deadlock.

LS: Yes. He silences the thing. He can easily refute him, but he does not make any dent. So Socrates clearly fails. [93]If he cannot refute Callicles, who is *relatively* well intentioned toward Socrates and not an abominable character—he is only very confused—what will happen in the many other cases? So Socrates, I am afraid, will not fill the bill. But there is someone here to whom Callicles listens more than to Socrates.

Student: Gorgias.

LS: Gorgias. What about Gorgias? The whole dialogue is made for Gorgias.[94] While Gorgias's rhetoric is not exhibited, and not even Gorgias's view of rhetoric is exhibited, Socrates's rhetoric and his view of rhetoric are exhibited; and they are exhibited in the Callicles section, at any rate, as not sufficient. Could it not be that the purpose of the dialogue as a whole is to say to Gorgias: This is the kind of thing you should do instead of the wholly frivolous things which you are doing now. I mean, he wrote, for example, a praise of salt and a praise of Helen, this ambiguous woman.[vii] But if he would make [speeches of] another kind[95] which would have an effect on the Athenian *dēmos* or at least on its leaders, then it would be something useful. In other words, if this is so, and I believe that is the case, then the dialogue would present in a clear manner the limitations of the Socratic art. But Socrates says that[96] he is only good at dialogue, at short speeches as distinguished from long speeches.[97] Public oratory is impossible.

Now there is one particular case, I would like to mention this now, of a rhetoric which is especially important. At the end of the dialogue we have a myth. This myth, however, is explicitly said to be not a myth (*muthos* in Greek) but a *logos*; and whatever this may mean, it surely means it is simple truth and not imagery. And this describes the punishment of the wicked after death. And the speech[98] doesn't have the slightest effect on Callicles. But the question is: Could not men other than Socrates—could not, say, this famous orator and rhetorician, Gorgias, perhaps produce[99] speeches inspiring fear of hell, which would induce men like Callicles, or could induce men like Callicles to that? Socrates could not do that; it is beyond his power. This, I think,[100] [is the] lesson the dialogue conveys. Now I think it is of no use to go on. Would some of you like to bring up one of the other points? Mr. Dry?

[vii] A work praising salt is mentioned by Eryximachus in Plato's *Symposium* (177b) and Isocrates (10.12); for Gorgias's "Encomium on Helen" see Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1948), 131–33.

Mr. Dry: A test of the extent of Socrates's ability would be whether or not Gorgias would catch on. How would we be able to determine whether Socrates's rhetoric would be effective to the point of teaching Gorgias the proper thing?

LS: Well, that is a very good question. And Plato has therefore given us the answer. You know Plato is a very decent writer. He does not create difficulties for us which he does not enable us to solve, otherwise it would just be tricky. It is sometimes not easy to do that, and[101] one has to know quite a few things which not everyone knows. But in this case it is simple, because there is a sequel to the *Gorgias*, we can say: the dialogue *Meno*, in which we see what Gorgias did after all. He did not obey Socrates's suggestion. So in other words, it is a gamble, a hope for the future that sometime someone with the gifts of Gorgias, and with the modesty which Gorgias doesn't have,[102] [will] do what Socrates tells him to do. It is[103] exactly the same problem as regarding poetry in the *Republic*. Apparently poetry is condemned unqualifiedly, you know, and in the tenth book even more than in the second or third book. And yet if one thinks a bit about it and reads more carefully, one sees that poetry is not simply condemned but it is only condemned if it claims to be autonomous. If it is in the service of philosophy, if it is ministerial to philosophy, then it is all right. The same is true of rhetoric. But where do you find poets who are willing to minister to philosophy? Not in our age. In the past there were some; some very great: Dante is the most obvious example.[104] There were also others. But at any rate, the problem is fundamentally the same, and the fact that Plato, or rather Socrates, shifts here the issue from rhetoric to poetry and back shows that we are confronted with the same problem. Yes?

Student: Why do you think that Gorgias's view isn't fully brought out by Plato in the dialogue?

LS: That is not a matter of what you call thinking, but a matter of brute fact.

Same Student: No, I mean what is the reason Plato doesn't fully bring out—

LS: No, I mean, the whole issue—the complete issue of rhetoric, the full issue of rhetoric is not brought out yet. For example, the very important question of legitimate forensic rhetoric, without which we could never understand Socrates's own *Apology*. Ya?

A general rule—well, first I have to say something to explain away what I meant by general.[105] There is only a small number of Platonic dialogues which I believe I have understood. I do not believe that there is anyone now living who can claim more than that. I mean, he may understand other dialogues much better than I do, but I don't believe there is a single one in the world who can claim that he has understood all dialogues as they must be understood. Therefore, when one makes a general rule, one[106] must always say: On the basis of my limited experience. We cannot help that. The term which is ordinarily used in social science is that you have to make hypotheses,[107] but this word has been so grossly abused that I try to avoid it.

Now then, after this explanation I'll say then that the general rule is that in every Platonic dialogue something very important for the subject matter of the dialogue is disregarded, is abstracted from, and the understanding of the dialogue, the adequate understanding would consist in seeing what is abstracted from and why it is abstracted from. I mean, for instance, in the dialogue *Euthyphro*, the word "soul" never occurs, although it is necessary in given passages that it should occur. It would be the natural word, a word which Plato frequently uses. The question arises: Why? I could answer that question in the case of *Euthyphro*; it would lead us too far. In the case of the *Republic*, I believe I have shown that there is a certain abstraction from *erōs* characteristic of the *Republic*. Not that it is not mentioned there; it is mentioned, but it is played down. For example, to mention one point: when[108] Socrates speaks there of the needs which induce men to enter society, the perpetuation of the species is not mentioned. The tyrant, injustice incarnate, is called *erōs* incarnate. This kind of thing, and I have tried to explain that. Here in the *Gorgias* we see a whole dimension is abstracted from, and the disregard of these forms of rhetoric which are so obviously necessary—even, after all, deliberative rhetoric is necessary if you want to have a republican commonwealth.[109] The extremism of the *Gorgias*, its radicalism—the complete separation of the philosophic life from the political life, and no combination of the two—this is the point one would have to understand, and I think we will be able to make some progress toward that when we study the brother or sister dialogue, the *Protagoras*.

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[1] Deleted "Now we will begin. (oh can you close the door, please?)."
[2] Deleted "One."
[3] Deleted "be used…."
[4] Deleted "that."
[5] Deleted "how this,."
[6] Deleted "and we cannot possibly read this all. Let us only… You have the… I have it here. Do you have the…."
[7] Deleted "No that is… yeah, roughly. But."
[8] Deleted "Yes? So but."
[9] Deleted "this remark here."
[10] Deleted "Now eros… In other words."
[11] Deleted "You must…."
[12] Deleted "We must…."
[13] Deleted "exploited."
[14] Deleted "he."
[15] Deleted "Callicles' own thesis."
[16] Moved "under the spell of political conventions."
[17] Deleted "is not… wouldn't."
[18] Deleted "And the... The."
[19] Deleted "And."
[20] Deleted "we cannot…."
[21] Deleted "Now."
[22] Deleted "are…they."
[23] Deleted "then philosophy if practiced by"
[24] Deleted "And."
[25] Deleted "to preserve themselves."
[26] Deleted "there is a certain…."
[27] Deleted "do we not…."
[28] Deleted "who has…."
[29] Deleted "What…."
[30] Deleted "I don't…."

[31] Deleted “this.”
[32] Deleted “is.”
[33] Deleted “With….”
[34] Deleted “he has.”
[35] Deleted “I mean….”
[36] Deleted “this….”
[37] Deleted “And this….”
[38] Deleted “makes a general….”
[39] Deleted “More… have more ashamed.”
[40] Deleted “Mr. Reinken: This must be so. LS: And.”
[41] Deleted “And that would be too….”
[42] Deleted “I think one….”
[43] Deleted “you.”
[44] Deleted “this implies.”
[45] Deleted “cannot…one.”
[46] Deleted “they are… if a speaks.”
[47] Deleted “number one.”
[48] Deleted “yes”
[49] Deleted “This part of the….”
[50] Deleted “why is…”
[51] Deleted “do they….”
[52] Moved “yet.”
[53] Deleted “ruler.”
[54] Deleted “in opposite.”
[55] Deleted “in opposition to it.”
[56] Deleted “also like something like.”
[57] Deleted “For what?.”
[58] Deleted “as if.”
[59] Deleted “when it comes….”
[60] Deleted “this, whether.”
[61] Deleted “give” Moved “later on.”
[62] Deleted “what is the relation between.”
[63] Deleted “In other words… yes.”
[64] Deleted “He will be in his….”
[65] Deleted “Now why is this not….”
[66] Deleted “Now what… for what….”
[67] Deleted “however”
[68] Deleted “he should….”
[69] Deleted “something… because.”
[70] Deleted “have.”
[71] Deleted “You can always.”
[72] Deleted “Oh.”
[73] Deleted “and also getting rid – the same thing.”
[74] Deleted “this is.”
[75] Deleted “this refute.”
[76] Deleted “less.”
[77] Deleted “he gives some….”
[78] Deleted “there.”
[79] Deleted “and… but.”
[80] Deleted “solid and stolid.”
[81] Deleted “has… “he.”
[82] Deleted “Now this is then… this has….”
[83] Deleted “this is.”
[84] Deleted “man is…for.”
[85] Deleted “a.”
[86] Deleted “lives.”

[87] Deleted “Well.”
[88] Deleted “on the….”
[89] Deleted “which you now read.”
[90] Deleted “And.”
[91] Deleted “Pardon?”
[92] Deleted “Pardon?”
[93] Deleted “I mean.”
[94] Deleted “Socrates, we can say….”
[95] Moved “of speeches.”
[96] Deleted “indicates by stating that he can….”
[97] Deleted “The public.”
[98] Deleted “is rather.”
[99] Deleted “fear inspiring.”
[100] Deleted “this.”
[101] Deleted “I mean.”
[102] Deleted “namely to.”
[103] Deleted “the same problem.”
[104] Deleted “But.”
[105] Deleted “I mean.”
[106] Deleted “I.”
[107] Deleted “You can also.”
[108] Deleted “Plato….”
[109] Deleted “These… has… I mean.”

Session 3: April 5, 1965

Sophistry, Rhetoric, and the Philosophic Life

Leo Strauss: The primary subject of the *Gorgias* is rhetoric, but this subject recedes somehow. It is overlapped by the question of how man should live, and in particular whether suffering injustice is better or worse than doing injustice. One may therefore say [that] in order to find a unity in the dialogue, the subject is not [1]rhetoric [simply] but just rhetoric, just speeches. There is another Platonic dialogue dealing with rhetoric: the *Phaedrus*. The subject of the *Phaedrus* is very clearly erotic speeches, both rhetoric and erotic speeches. So the comparison of the two dialogues leads us to see the fundamental difference—of which we are aware, I suppose, anyway, but we see it as a great central Platonic theme: justice on the one hand, *erōs* on the other, which does not mean that these two things are mutually exclusive, but they are different. Their relation, however, is obscure.

Now Plato has taken up this difference on the grandest scale by writing *The Republic* on the one hand, and the *Banquet* on the other: the *Republic* devoted to justice and the *Banquet* devoted to *erōs*. Plato has then devoted two works, two dialogues to rhetoric. Aristotle wrote at least, to speak only of what is surely genuine and preserved, a single treatise on rhetoric. Aristotle treats rhetoric entirely by itself, in isolation. There is no question of erotic speeches in Aristotle; compared to Plato he deals with various kinds of political speeches. Aristotle treats rhetoric in isolation. Plato, we may say, never treats a subject in isolation, and this explains the difference. To this one could make this objection: that the different dialogues have different subjects—say, just speeches, erotic speeches—so [Plato][2] does treat subjects in isolation. Let me therefore make my statement somewhat more precise: Plato never treats a subject in isolation from the question of how one should live. When Aristotle deals with the parts of animals, he is only concerned with the parts of animals, and the question of how one should live is not immediately present. And the sign of the fact that this is the true situation, that Plato never treats a subject in isolation from the question of how one should live, the sign of that is the presence of Socrates in all dialogues. Socrates, whatever he may talk about, presents this question. If I say Socrates is present in all dialogues, I seem to have said the thing that is not. What's the objection?

Student: The *Laws*.

LS: The *Laws*. Yes, I admit that. But I would also say that I believe a deeper study of the *Laws* would show that Socrates is present in the *Laws* under one assumption: that he did not follow the order of the laws to undergo capital punishment but escaped from prison, and then he would have gone to Crete and do[ne] his good work there. But this would need of course a long proof.

Now let us complete our account of the *Gorgias*. Rhetoric is condemned as unjust on the basis of the view that the only thing which counts, the one thing needful, is justice, disregarding completely the bodily and external goods, abstracting from them[3] as well as from pleasure. The fundamental distinction of the good and the pleasant in such a way that every concern with pleasure seems to be wrong. Why?[4] What is the basis of this possibility? Answer: If life is death, if the only true life is the life after death, and happiness after death is reserved for the just—and this is more or less the meaning of the myth, the so-called myth at the end. But justice does not mean quite the same in the *Gorgias* as it would mean[5] to all men of all times and ages. Justice is somehow identified with philosophy, which is surely not the generally accepted view at any time. And[6] Socrates says on his day of death in the dialogue called *Phaedo* [that] philosophizing means learning to die. Now this whole strand implies the otherworldliness, implies the depreciation of the city, because the city is of course essentially and radically this world. But there is also another strand in Plato's thought, and we will come across it by taking up a key passage in Plato's *Laws*. Mr. Reinken will be so good and[7] do his pleasant duty. In the first book of the *Laws*, 631b7. Should I find it for you?

Mr. Reinken:[8]
Ath.: "Oh stranger" (thus you ought to have said) "it is not for nothing that the laws of the Cretans are held in superlatively high repute among all the Hellenes. For they are true laws inasmuch as they effect the well-being of those who use them by supplying all things that are good. Now goods are of two kinds—"[i]

LS: "They supply all good things, all good things." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
"human and divine; and the human goods are dependent on the divine, and he who receives the greater acquires also the less, or else he is bereft of both. The lesser goods are those of which—"

LS: Did you say "*he* who acquires the greater"? "The city which acquires the greater." Ya?

Mr. Reinken:
"The city which acquires the greater acquires also the less, or else is bereft of both. The lesser goods are those of which health ranks first, beauty second; the third is strength, in running and all other bodily exercises; and the fourth is wealth—no blind god Plutus, but keen of sight, provided that he has wisdom for companion. And wisdom, in turn, has first place among the goods that are divine, and rational temperance, moderation of soul comes second; from these two, when united with courage, there issues justice as the third; and the fourth is courage. Now all these are by nature before the human goods, and verily the lawgiver also must so rank them."

[i] Plato *Laws*, trans. R. G. Bury (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press Loeb Library, 1926). The speaker is the Athenian Stranger.

LS: That's all we need.[9] You have here an order of four human goods and four divine goods. The human goods are the bodily and external goods, and the divine ones are the goods of the soul. And here Socrates—or the Athenian stranger, rather—says [that] the goods of the soul are the necessary and sufficient condition of the other goods in this life, because in another life there wouldn't be a body and wealth. In the center of the *Republic*, Socrates says the rule of the philosopher-kings will make cease evils from the city and the human race altogether. And as he states shortly afterwards, the philosophers live already in this life, the life of the islands of the blessed. In other words, this passage in the *Laws* and the *Republic* and of course many, many other utterances show that Plato has a very high regard for the *polis*[10] as [a] this-worldly thing. These two strands must be considered equally and there is always the danger that one forgets one for the other: the otherworldly or this-worldly, to state it very simply. In the Middle Ages, Christian Middle Ages, the otherworldly Plato was much better known than the political Plato. In our age, of course, the opposite is true, and we must keep both in mind.

Now this tension or contradiction occurs also within the *Gorgias*. On the one hand, rhetoric is rejected as downright injustice, and on the other hand we observe a certain rehabilitation of rhetoric. Rhetoric is rejected as a flattery, a kind of flattery; and on the other hand it is admitted that rhetoric can be a genuine art, but does not yet exist.[11] It is the art of making the citizen just by means of speeches.[12] So this is quite political. But what about rhetoric which is used for one's just defense against unjust accusation? Is this also flattery, or can this be art? Is the concern with such defense not just and reasonable? Callicles tells Socrates that he, Socrates, will be the victim of every scoundrel if Socrates doesn't take care of his defense by rhetoric, which saves his life. Let us turn in the *Gorgias* to 511b7.[13] After this question has come up,[14] Callicles says: Now is this state of affairs, that you are helpless over against every scoundrel, is this not a matter, a proper matter for indignation? What was Callicles's answer and what was Socrates's?

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: Not to a man of sense, as can easily be proved. Do you think that a man ought to make it his chief ambition to prolong his life to the utmost limit, and spend it in the practice of the arts which preserve us from danger, oratory, for example, which you advised me to cultivate as a protection in the law courts?
Call.: And very sound advice it is, too.[ii] (511b-c)

LS: He swears by Zeus, by the way.

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: Well, my good sir, do you also regard ability to swim—

LS: No. "Ability" is too weak; the *knowledge* of swimming.

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: knowledge of swimming as an important accomplishment—

[ii] The reading here is from Plato *Gorgias*, trans. Walter Hamilton (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960).

LS: As something grand.

Mr. Reinken:
Call.: Good heavens, no. (511c)

LS: He swears again, you see? So he is very much present; it's no longer a conversation for the benefit of Gorgias but his own vital problem is involved. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: Yet swimming saves men from death, when they get into a situation that requires it. But if swimming seems to you a triviality, take a more important branch of knowledge, navigation, which, like oratory, saves not only people's lives but also the persons and property that belong to them.[15] (511c-d)

LS: But obviously you cannot by swimming save large chests of gold. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Navigation is a modest art that knows her place; she does not put on airs or make out that she has performed some brilliant feat, even though she achieves as much as forensic oratory; she brings a man safe from Aegina for no more than two obols, I believe, and even if he comes from Egypt or Pontus or ever so far away the utmost she charges for this great service, for conveying in safety, as I said, a man and his children and property and womenfolk, is two drachmae when he disembarks at the Piraeus; and the man who possesses this skill and has accomplished all this lands and walks about the shore beside the ship in a quite unassuming way. (511d-e)

LS: Now this is developed very amusingly and forcefully in the sequel. We cannot read that; we limit ourselves to this. The key point is this. Granted that forensic rhetoric can save a man's life and he may not[16] wish to live to eighty, let's say a man of twenty or thirty could be unjustly accused and one could not blame him for being unreasonably concerned for his life. Forensic rhetoric is as lowly an art as swimming, piloting and, as he makes clear in the sequel, generalship (which saves the cities) or medicine. And that is a crucial step. Forensic rhetoric *is* an art. Swimming is an art; and the other things are arts, although nothing grand. Callicles unreasonably regards some of the lifesaving arts as high and others as low: rhetoric as high and swimming and piloting as low. He would never give his daughter in marriage to a pilot, but of course to a general he would. But that's very unreasonable, as Socrates makes clear. Callicles is under the spell of that convention which he claims to despise. He contradicts himself. He is concerned with lifesaving above everything else, and at the same time he is concerned with being a courageous man. Now courage means exactly the virtue which controls and limits our desire to live, the willingness to die for something. And this is one of the many contradictions which he has. But if forensic rhetoric, as is now clearly admitted—forensic rhetoric, not the high rhetoric which Socrates claims to have, why does Socrates not practice it? For this we must turn to 521d6.

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: I believe that I am one of the few Athenians—perhaps indeed there is no other—who studies the genuine art of statesmanship, and that I am the only man now living who puts it into practice. So because what I say on any occasion— (521d)

LS: The true political art, the true political art. Pericles and Themistocles, they had a sham political art. And all the others, except Socrates: he is a true statesman. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
So because what I say on any occasion is not designed to please, and because I aim not at what is most agreeable but at what is best, and will not employ the subtle arts which you advise, I shall have no defense to offer in the court of law. I can only repeat what I was saying to Polus; I shall be like a doctor brought before a tribunal of children at the suit of a confectioner. Imagine what sort of defense a man like that could make before such a court, if he were accused in the following terms: "Children, the accused has committed a number of crimes against you; he is the ruin of even the youngest among you with his surgery and cautery; he reduces you to a state of helpless misery by choking you with bitter draughts and inflicting upon you a regime of starvation which cuts you off from food and drink. What a contrast to the abundant and varied luxury which with I have entertained you." What do you think that the doctor could find to say in such a plight? If he were to utter the truth and tell the children that he had done all these things in the interest of their health, think of the prodigious outcry that a court so constituted would raise. (521d-522a)

LS: You[17] see, here he cannot say the truth. If he were to say the truth there would only be an outcry. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Call.: Perhaps it would; one would have to be prepared for it.
Soc.: Then don't you think that the accused would be at his wit's end for a reply?
Call.: No doubt he would.
Soc.: Well, that is the situation in which I am sure that I shall find myself if I come before a court of law. I shall not be able to point to any pleasures that I have provided for my judges, the only kind of service and good terms that they recognize; indeed I see nothing to envy either in those who purvey or those who receive such services. And if it is alleged against me either that I am the ruin of the younger people— (522a-b)

LS: "That I corrupt the younger ones," to keep more literally to the ordinary translation of the formal charge. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
corrupt the young people by reducing them to a state of helpless doubt or that I insult their elders by bitter criticism in public or in private no defense will avail me."

LS: Literally, "I would not"—again, "not be able to say the truth." Namely?

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: whether true or not, the truth being simply that in all that I say I am guided by what is right and that my actions are in the interest of those who are sitting in judgement on me. So presumably I shall have no alternative but to submit to my fate, whatever it may be. (522b-c)

LS: Stop here. Socrates explains here why he does not use the art of forensic rhetoric. Precisely because he has practiced the true political art, which is the true rhetorical art, he cannot save himself through forensic rhetoric, however justly used. The people will not understand him and therefore it is useless for him to say the truth to them. This implies of course that his true rhetoric will have been completely or almost completely ineffective, because if it had had any influence on the citizen body, there would be perhaps a majority who would acquit him of the accusation. And this, incidentally, is important because[18] [Socrates] accuses Pericles and Themistocles and the others[19] of[20] [making] the Athenian people worse than they were[21] because after [those men had] given them all the benefits they gave—walls, wars, navy, empire—they were accused by the people whom they benefited. Now Socrates too tried to benefit the Athenian people and had the same fate as Pericles, Themistocles, and so on. This is of course not stressed, but must be noted.

Socrates denies, or at least does not grant, that rhetoric is to be used for self-defense. He *does* grant that rhetoric is to be used for self-accusation, or for the accusation of one's friends, one's nearest and dearest, and one's city. I draw this inference: the self-defense of Socrates, of the philosopher, is possible only as [an] accusation of the city. This he may do. For by defending himself, the philosopher would recognize the *polis* as [a] judge[22] [of] philosophy. He would recognize the *polis* as a tribunal which rightfully calls philosophy before itself. He would recognize the *polis* as an authority to which philosophy is subject. But it is clearly, as the Greeks would say, against nature that philosophy would have to be responsible to the *polis*. The only just thing is to question the authority of the city, to call the city before the tribunal of philosophy: to accuse the city, which does not recognize philosophy, i.e., to use accusatory rhetoric. Accusatory rhetoric is of course also a form of forensic rhetoric. But can the *polis* understand the claim of philosophy? The implication is no, but with the qualification that the city might understand it, namely, if the peak or core of philosophy is disregarded, then the citizen body might get some inkling of what philosophy is.

Now in the *Apology* and *Crito*, of which you doubtless have heard and many of you will have read them,[23] Socrates does recognize the authority of the city and of its laws: in the *Apology*, because he defends himself against a formal charge in a formal law court; and in the *Crito*, he says: No, I must not stealthily run away from prison because the laws are sacred and must be obeyed. In the *Gorgias*, he questions the authority of the city without, however, making fully clear the character of philosophy. Needless to say, he makes the character of philosophy much less clear even in the *Apology* and the *Crito*. In the *Republic*, however, he makes the character of philosophy fully clear, and the answer is there. He gives the solution to the conflict between city and philosophy: the philosophers must rule, i.e., the city as such must be absolutely subject to philosophers, the alternative being that the philosophers are subject to the nonphilosophers, which is against nature, to

use this phrase. From the *Gorgias*, the conflict between philosophy and the city appears to be insoluble. The solution suggested in the *Republic*, the philosopher-kings, is not considered in the *Gorgias*—perhaps alluded to, but not more.

Now one can of course say: How do you know that the conflict is insoluble? Is this not a very (as they say) pessimistic view of the situation, a prejudice as much as the opposite optimistic view? The insolubility of the conflict between philosophy and the city is demonstrated *ad oculos*, to our eyes, by the only Athenian citizen with whom Socrates converses in the *Gorgias*—that is, Callicles. Here you have a man who is not particularly biased against Socrates or against philosophy, but yet you see how he reacts. Socrates has no influence on Callicles, but Gorgias has. The question thus arises: Could Gorgias not tame the Callicleses of various levels [of] the city,[24] so that the city would let Socrates live, and even listen to him? Hence there must be, there ought to be another kind of rhetoric,[25] distinguished from vulgar rhetoric as ordinarily practiced, [as well as] from just forensic rhetoric and the true rhetoric. [It is this other kind of rhetoric] which Socrates claims is necessary. There must be another kind of rhetoric which tames the *demos*, the citizen body as a whole, by ingratiating itself with it, by appealing to it. This teaching of the good which has nothing to do with the pleasant would have this effect of the physician giving bitter pills: simply repulsive. And we have seen that Gorgias [said],[26] when he went with his brother to [speak to] a patient, that the brother could not possibly convince the patient to undergo an unpleasant operation or whatnot; the rhetorician Gorgias could do it without knowing anything of medicine.[27] The dialogue *Gorgias*, we can say, is an appeal to Gorgias to do that: as it were, to mollify the *demos*[28] [as] Orpheus mollified the beasts, so that they will let men like Socrates alone and do their work.

This interpretation is indirectly confirmed by the situation in the *Republic*. I have said already before that the *Republic*[29] consists of three parts in many ways, but I mean in one particular way. There is the father-son conversation with Cephalus and Polemarchus in the first book; then the Thrasymachus section; and then finally the brother and brother section, Glaucon and Adeimantus, book[s] 2 to 10, the bulk of the work. Now the *Gorgias* is built up in a strictly parallel way: first the dialogue with Gorgias; then with Polus; and then with Callicles. So Thrasymachus is here in the center occupying the same central position which Polus occupies apparently in the *Gorgias*. Now this Thrasymachus[30] has a certain similarity with Polus because he is also rather savage. *Polus* is the Greek word for colt: untamed, not broken in. And Thrasymachus [is] obviously very savage, as you see from the very beginning. In spite of that, Socrates says somewhere in the fifth or sixth book that he and Thrasymachus have become friends; why, they never were enemies! The context in which he makes the remark is when he shows how one could tame the *demos*, persuade the *demos* of the worth of philosophy. So[31] Thrasymachus fulfills the function there in the *Republic* which Gorgias is meant to fulfill in the city at large. Needless to say that Thrasymachus is here in a very select company of a few people where it is very easy to win compared with the marketplace.

To come back to the point I made:[32] rhetoric is absolutely needed in order to bring about a reconciliation—*some* reconciliation between philosophy and the city, but this

reconciliation requires that philosophy undergo some obfuscation. Philosophy as such cannot be reconciled. The condemnation of rhetoric in the *Gorgias* is linked up with a scheme according to which the legislative art is the highest art. I will remind you.[33] [LS writes on the blackboard] Now you remember: body, soul, gymnastics, medicine, legislative art, and the art of judging. Good . . .

Now I said the condemnation of rhetoric, the unqualified condemnation, is linked up with a scheme according to which the legislative art is the highest art. The art[34] [that takes] care of building up the health of the soul is[35] distinguish[ed] from restoring its health. We must therefore say [that] philosophy appears to begin with in the guise of the legislative art. That the citizen can understand, that laws are necessary; therefore [so is] legislation, and also that intelligent legislation, legislation having principles and having a fundamental clarity is preferable to random legislation. So philosophy appears in the guise of the legislative art. But now rhetoric has been rehabilitated to some extent in the Callicles section, as we have seen. How does this affect the status of the legislative art? This we have to consider now, and let us turn and read a few short passages, 503d5.

Mr. Reinken:[36]
Call.: I do not know how to answer you.
Soc.: You will find an answer if you look carefully. Let us consider quite calmly whether any of the men you have named was of this type. Come now, the good man, who always aims at the best in what he says—

LS: [37]"Who always *speaks* with a view to the best." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
will have some definite object in view, will he not? He will no more proceed at random than other professional men, each of whom chooses and employs means and materials with an eye to his particular task, in order that what he is fashioning may have a definite form. Take, for example, painters, architects, shipwrights, any other profession you like, and see how each of them arranges the different elements of his work in a certain order, and makes one part fit and harmonized with another until the thing emerges a consistent and organized whole. Among other professional—

LS: Let us say more precisely, "ordered and adorned." Ordered and adorned. Let us translate it a bit literally: "Until the whole comes together as an ordered and adorned thing." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Among other professional men are those who deal with the body, trainers and doctors, whom we have already mentioned; they may be presumed to give order and proportion to the body. (504a)

LS: That is all we need. You see, here he speaks of "the form," the same word which is ordinarily translated by idea.[38] Socrates does not say that the craftsman, and hence of course also the legislator, looks at the idea which he tries to impose on the matter. That

he looks at the order—the idea which forms the shape is only in the finished product—he looks at the *taxis*, at the order; then he brings forth a form, say, of the shoe or of the table. There is no transcendent idea there, which means the doctrine of ideas, the famous doctrine, does not come out in the *Gorgias*. And that would mean, on the simple and superficial level on which we have to argue, first, that since for Plato philosophy is above all the doctrine of the ideas or forms, that philosophy does not come out. Now a bit further on in 506b.

Mr. Reinken:
Call.: Go on my good sir, and finish on your own.
Soc.: Listen then while I recapitulate the argument from the start. Is pleasure identical with good? Callicles and I agree that it is not.—Is pleasure to be sought as a means to good, or good as a means to pleasure? Pleasure as a means to good.[iii]—Is pleasure something whose presence makes us pleased, and good something whose presence makes us good? Certainly.—But we, and everything else that can be called good, are good by the reason of the presence of some excellent quality, are we not? (506c-d)

LS: "Of some goodness."

Mr. Reinken:
of some goodness? That seems an inevitable conclusion, Callicles.—Now the excellence of anything—

LS: "The goodness."

Mr. Reinken:
the goodness of anything—

LS: The word [is the] word *aretē*, which we ordinarily translate by virtue, which has indeed the meaning of goodness or excellence. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
whether it be an implement or a physical body or a soul or any living being, is not manifested at random in its highest form, but springs from a certain order— (506d)

LS: It doesn't come to the . . . in a random way. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
but springs from a certain order and rightness and art appropriate in each case. Is that true? In my opinion, yes.—Then the goodness[iv] of a thing depends on its having a certain ordered beauty which is the result of arrangement? That is what I should say.—Consequently the presence of the order proper to it is what makes each thing good? So I believe.—It follows that the soul which possesses the appropriate kind of order is better

[iii] Mr. Reinken reads "Good as a means to pleasure," evidently in error.
[iv] In the translation: "excellence"

than the disorderly? Obviously.—And the soul which possesses order is orderly? Of course.—And if orderly, disciplined by good sense?

LS: Yes. Or "moderate."

Mr. Reinken:
Unquestionably.—So the disciplined soul is good after all. I can't see any other conclusion my dear Callicles, can you? (506d-507a)

LS: [39]The excellence or virtue or goodness of any thing or being is due to order, *taxis*, and [ornament]—*kosmos*.[40] A soul which has received this by the *technē*, by the art of the true statesman, is *kosmia*—that's the adjective of *kosmos*, derived from *kosmos*—is adorned. Is adorned. This has in Greek a better[41] [sense] than that in practice: [it has] the same meaning as moderate, it is well-ordered. Well-ordered. As will become clear from the sequel, virtue is reduced to moderation in contradistinction[42] to justice.

Now we come to the key passage[43] [on] which this turns. But I must remind you of the word *kosmos*, which is here hitherto used in a perfectly commonsensical meaning, and can mean [simply] the[44] external adornment, say, of a woman; and [it] can of course also mean the good order introduced, say, into a room or into a table or any other thing.

Now let us turn to the key point at 507c, where the new paragraph begins.

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: That then is the position that I adopt and maintain to be true. If I am right, then it appears that each of us who wants to be happy must pursue in practice self-discipline—(507c)

LS: That is *sōphrosynē*, moderation.

Mr. Reinken:
moderation and run as fast as his legs will carry him from licentiousness. He must make it his main endeavour not to need correction, but if either he or anyone in whom he is interested, be they individuals or a whole city,[v] should stand in need of it, correction must be inflicted and the penalty paid if happiness is to be achieved.

This seems to me the goal that one should have in view throughout one's life; we can win happiness only by bending all our own efforts and those of the state to the realization of uprightness and moderation,[vi] not by allowing our appetites to go unchecked, and, in an attempt to satisfy their endless importunity, leading the life of a brigand.

The man who adopts the latter course will win the love neither of God nor of his fellow-men; he is incapable of social life, and without social life there can be no love. (507c-e)

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[v] In the translation: "state"
[vi] In the translation: "self-discipline"

LS: "Friendship" would be the more literal translation, but "love" is not entirely incorrect, of course. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
We are told on good authority, Callicles, that heaven and earth have their respective inhabitants are held together by the bonds of society—

LS: No, be a bit more literal: "that heaven and earth and gods and human beings."

Mr. Reinken:
and gods and human beings are held together by the bonds of society and love [*philia*][vii] and order and discipline and righteousness, and that is why the universe is called an ordered whole—

LS: That's not good. "And this is the reason why this whole is called cosmos." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
called cosmos, and not a state of disorder and license. You, I think, for all your cleverness, have failed to grasp the truth; you have not observed how great a part geometric equality plays in heaven and earth—

LS: "Among gods and men."

Mr. Reinken:
among gods and men, and because you neglect the study of geometry you preach the doctrine of unfair shares. (508a)

LS: Yes. In other words, of getting as much as you can. So this is the last passage of *Gorgias* which we absolutely need.[45] Here a study of the cosmos—*kosmos* was a relatively recent term at that time, it means literally ornament, something adorned, beautiful.[46] This is here linked up with the notion of geometric equality,[47] [or] proportional equality. With a slight exaggeration, we can say mathematical cosmology[48] is the basis of the true rhetoric or politics. This is the genuine thing of which sophistry is the perversion, not the legislative art, the legislative art is much lower in rank because, as we have seen last time, psychology is necessarily the basis of the legislative art[49] but psychology as the psychology of man can only be part of a larger whole, namely, the cosmos. This is the utmost extent to which the character of philosophy is revealed in the *Gorgias*, in this passage. By the way, does this remind you of something else you know of Plato, this mathematical cosmology? Yes?

Student: Didn't his Academy have a sign about you have to know geometry to come into my school, or something like that?

LS: Yes,[50] this is true, but there is a work. Yes?

[vii] Mr. Reinken's interpolation.

Student: Is it in the *Republic*, where he has the figure of the line and divides it into the—

LS: [51]The matter is something very obvious.[52] In the Middle Ages, the most famous Platonic work was the *Timaeus*, and the *Timaeus* develops this mathematical cosmology. And it is no accident, I believe, that the term "law of nature" occurs in Plato only in the *Gorgias* when it is used by Callicles and in the *Timaeus* where it is used by Timaeus. This only in passing.

The study of this cosmos, of this whole[53]—there is another whole—leads to *kosmiotēs*, to the quality of being *kosmios*, i.e., orderly, which is the same as moderate or self-controlled and which is here presented as *the* root virtue. But the question of course arises: Is mathematical cosmology the highest? Are not the ideas higher? And in this connection, I remind you again of the fact that the *Gorgias*, which[54] [has so much to say] about justice, never raises the question of what justice is, so that we are in a way always in the dark [about] what they are talking about. But in a very general way we know it; in a commonsensical way, we know it. But that is surely not sufficient.

We may[55] draw this conclusion: that the rehabilitation of rhetoric goes together with the revelation of philosophy as mathematical cosmology. We must say at least a word about the dramatic situation. The important change from the simple condemnation of rhetoric to its rehabilitation is somehow rendered possible by Callicles, by Callicles's appeal to nature in contradistinction to convention. Callicles realizes the necessity of appealing from what is by convention just or noble to what is by nature just or noble. This appeal is the work of philosophy. But he also says that after one has discovered what is by nature right and noble in one's youth, one must turn to grander things. Now you know it; why should you further bother about it now? You lead the just life, meaning the life of self-aggrandizement in his case. Philosophy is not the right kind of life. And this is clearly the opposite of Socrates, whose view one can state as follows: the natural right, that which is by nature right, is the life devoted to philosophy; hence the discovery of natural right keeps one with philosophy. Is it not clear? Whereas if the natural right is not philosophy, then one turns away from philosophy to the practice of this natural right, whatever that may be.

Now Callicles's primary motive, [which] has appeared from a passage[56] which we have read in 511d, may be said to be this, a very noble or respectable one: the philosopher is, like Socrates, helpless against his persecutors. He is animated by moral indignation that a man like Socrates should be at the mercy of every scoundrel. [57]Philosophers must enable themselves to defend themselves against their enemies. Is it not reasonable? But then a strange thing takes place. The action taken on behalf of philosophy in order to defend it should remain subordinate to philosophy. But in Callicles's case, it becomes more important than philosophy itself, and that is the fundamental contradiction here. One would have to study this carefully (which we cannot do here), namely, that there is a way which leads from the perfectly sound and just self-defense of the better man especially to the right of the stronger, and this is explained at some length in the *Gorgias*. What can he do in order to defend himself? The better man, in order to protect himself, must assimilate himself to the powerful, to the strong. That is of course the beginning of the

end, because such assimilation corrupts him, naturally. He must be useful to the strong; otherwise they would not[58] take any interest in him. How can he be useful to the strong unless he adopts their ends, which are not his ends? He must, to use a present-day phrase, become an ideologist of the regime. This is very good and necessary, I suppose, but it is of course not philosophy. So this is all I wanted to say about the *Gorgias*. And before I go on I must make a longish speech—[viii]

Student: —prospect for developing the new rhetoric since he seems to be persuaded by Socrates and he's also a student of Gorgias?

LS: In other words, why is Polus persuadable?

Student: Well, you maintained that the dialogue was directed to Gorgias. I was wondering whether there was a possibility that Polus might develop the new rhetoric?

LS: No. Gorgias is a much greater, more gifted man. That is a very simple thing.

Student: You did point out that Thrasymachus [is] the man who corresponds to Polus. . . .

LS: Yes, that is true, but still Thrasymachus was a greater man. I mean, one can easily see that from the survey of the most famous rhetoricians which Plato gives in the *Phaedrus*. Thrasymachus was, let us say very simply, more gifted.

Mr. Shulsky: In the section of the discussion with Polus where . . . said that the[59] punishing would be a just action and since it wouldn't be beneficial to the punisher [the implication was] it would be pleasant[60]. That sort of indicated that Polus would have his place in a good society as[61] sort of a prosecuting attorney or something that he could . . .

LS: [62]Once we have realized—which is not so easy, but[63] one can [do]—that the best regime simply, absolutely according to nature, according to which the best men should rule, is the rule of philosophers. The famous rule of the philosophers. Once we have realized that this is not only improbable, because if it is probable we still might try to get it, but that it is strictly speaking impossible[64], of course then we would know a crucial truth about the *polis* as *polis*: why the *polis* as *polis* simply is incompatible with the notion of being ruled by philosophers. Then we would have to accept—to cling to the Platonic line, you must understand this intelligently or symbolically—we must accept a society with private property, with inequality of the sexes, and some other unfortunate things. You know? [Laughter] And then naturally there will be law courts, that goes without saying.[65] Then there is of course the question of whether a decent man, simply because he is inarticulate, will not have a ghost of a chance against an articulate scoundrel. There must therefore be honest men who are willing, for a remuneration, I fear, to defend that poor man before a law court, and this is a perfectly respectable profession,[66] as we all know, if it is truly practiced in the spirit, which is not always the case. And that is the basis of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. Since he admits these commonsensical

[viii] The tape was changed at this point.

propositions, he says: Well, let us see what a good forensic orator has to know and what he has to do. . . . But needless to say, Aristotle doesn't go into the question in the *Rhetoric*[67] as to the place that[68] forensic rhetoric or, for that matter, any other of the ordinary rhetorics, occupies in the whole. That is clear from Aristotle's point of view, too. They are rather lowly arts, you know, more akin to swimming or to medicine than to philosophy. Mr. Dry?

Mr. Dry: Was Socrates's sharp distinction between the pleasant and the good consistent with his aim to teach Gorgias the true rhetoric, which [he] would have to, to ingratiate [himself] with the many?

LS: It was a condition for him, namely, in this way: If the rhetoric of a man like Gorgias, or say, Thrasymachus, should practice is one which tames the *dēmos* by ingratiating himself with it, this ingratiation doesn't mean that they would flatter[69] [him]. That can very well mean that he appeals to their fears, you know? But still he assimilates himself to the *dēmos*.[ix] Now[70] this consideration of the pleasures and pains as ordinarily considered presupposes the distinction between the pleasant and the good. The highest form of rhetoric would not be concerned with ingratiation in either sense. It would be[71] concerned [only] with the good, just as the physician would say: You have to undergo this operation, and whether it is painful or not is irrelevant, that's the only way in which you can get rid of your cancer, or whatever it may be. And a secondary art would come in, in the form of anesthesiology, I suppose, and would say: How can we make it as little painful as possible? Which is of course a perfectly sensible thing; Socrates would not deny that. But in order to give their proper rights to the good on the one hand and the pleasant on the other, you must first distinguish them. Is this not clear?

And the second point, which is equally crucial, is that the good is a higher consideration than the pleasant. The very simple commonsensical truth [is that] we do not admire people for their pleasures. We can perhaps envy them, but we do not admire them. We admire them for their goodness in the wide sense, for their excellence. Or to take the most simple example, the parallel question regarding self-preservation: [it is] the highest good[72] [in the] point of view[73] [of] Hobbes, for example. The simple argument against that: that this is a very powerful thing in man, no sensible man would ever deny, but can it be the controlling, the overriding consideration? And, I think, commonsensically speaking, we all[74] [admire] some men who are dead and we do not admire quite a few people who are alive, so being alive cannot be the highest consideration. This has to be deepened somewhat, but I think it has some weight. Good.

Student: [75]It's strange that Thrasymachus could be persuaded in a dialogue that goes to the peak of justice, and in a dialogue concerned with teaching Gorgias how to use the proper rhetoric, somehow the discussion of justice is too harsh to be accepted, too much of a—

[ix] In this sentence Strauss uses the plural "they" (and hence plural verbs); the editor has changed this to the singular "he."

LS: Yes, because[76] the point is this. Thrasymachus becomes in a way persuaded. More literally, he becomes *tamed* by Socrates. He becomes tamed. Now Gorgias is also tamed very soon. We see that he is a hopeless victim in the hands of the supreme dialectician, rhetorician Socrates.[77] This is a very important question, the comparison of the *Republic* and the *Gorgias*, but we cannot go into it.

I would like to make a transition to what we will do now. From now on we shall turn to a close study of the *Protagoras*. Now how can we justify this? After all, we are here in a political science department. I believe almost all of you are political science students.[78] [Laughter][79] How can we justify it, we who live within the turmoils of 1965, confronted with such pressing questions as Vietnam and the civil rights issue? In both cases, we find groups of men fighting for their interests—I take now a very unpatriotic view of the South Vietnamese, or of the South Vietnamese communists, rather. They are groups of men fighting for their *interests* and at the same time appealing to ideas. Is it not hopeless to expect any light from Plato for the understanding of these contemporary phenomena? After all, Plato, in his analysis of the political man in the *Gorgias*, reduced the political man to the lowest possible denominator, you remember: he is ultimately a man concerned with his belly and nothing else. That would be as grossly unfair as trying to explain a phenomenon like Stalin in terms of the famous suppers in the Kremlin, with lots of vodka and caviar, of which you all have read, and also in terms of the glee which he felt when he heard of the execution of his opponents—there are some ghastly stories about that. But still I would say, however abominable that man[80] [might have been], that is simply not sufficient for understanding it, because there are other people who have these terrible qualities and[81] lack certain qualities which Stalin possessed.

Now how could Plato go so far in depreciating the political man as he did in the *Gorgias*?[82] The revolutionary movements of our time all point back to the French Revolution. The peculiarity of the French Revolution was well described by Burke in well-known passages, [and] by Hegel—you remember what we read: in the French Revolution, man for the first time tried to stand on his head. But let me read to you a man somewhat closer to us, who has been a very close student of the French Revolution: Alexis de Tocqueville, in his book on the *ancien régime*:[x]

"All civil and political revolutions have had a fatherland and have closed themselves within the fatherland. The French Revolution did not have a proper territory of its own. On the contrary, its effect has rather been so to speak to efface from the map all ancient frontiers. . . . Read all the annals of history; you will not find a single political revolution which has the same character. You will find it only in certain religious revolutions. . . . The French Revolution is a political revolution which has operated in the manner and which has in a way taken the aspect of a religious revolution. Look by which particular traits and characteristics it achieves to resemble religious revolutions. Not only does it expand outside as religious revolutions, but, like them, it penetrates outside through preaching and propaganda. A political revolution which inspires proselytism,

[x] Strauss translates the French text as he reads. See Alexis de Tocqueville, *L'ancien régime et la Révolution*, ed. J.-P. Mayer (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), part 1, chap. 3. Ellipses show that Strauss omitted portions of the passage.

which one preaches as ardently to strangers as one accomplishes it with passion at home, — consider, what a novel spectacle. Among all unknown things which the French Revolution has shown to the world, this is surely the most novel. The French Revolution has operated with regard to this world precisely in the same manner as the religious revolutions act with a view to the other world. It has considered the citizen in an abstract manner, outside all the particular societies, just as the religions consider man in general independently of country and time. The French Revolution has sought not merely what is the peculiar right of the French citizen but what are the duties and general rights of men in political matters."

And then I read to you only one more heading of a chapter later on: "How it came that toward the middle of the 18th century men of letters became the principal political men of the country and the effects which resulted from that."[xi]

Now in developing this,[83] Tocqueville makes clear that these men of letters called themselves and were called philosophers. So the French Revolution is *the* first revolution tending toward the regeneration of the human race by its own power in this world, the first philosophic revolution. That is the same thing as what Burke of course said very early [on]; I just took Tocqueville for some reasons of convenience. Hence,[84] since both politics and philosophy existed a long time before the French Revolution, the French Revolution was based on a new view of the relation of philosophy and politics. It cannot be understood if one does not see[85] [that view] in contrast with the old view. The old view, one can say the pre-French Revolutionary [view], expected less of politics than the new view: for example, no regeneration of the human race.[86] This is a simple historical fact which I think everyone will admit, but it is not completely deprived of practical consequences regarding the issue, the basic issues of our time. The issue is this: What kind of solutions can possibly be expected, whether it is in foreign affairs or in domestic affairs? This is the fundamental question. Whether such goals as the regeneration of the human race—to use the phrase used by Tocqueville, you can also use other ones—is a possible goal of politics.

Now[87] it goes without saying that this view didn't emerge with the *philosophes* of the eighteenth century, the French philosophers, but the least one would have to say is to read Descartes, who has been called rightly the grandfather of the French Revolution.[88] Still, it was even older; the closest approximation to the new view within earlier philosophy is in a way Plato's *Republic*, especially book 5: that is, when the philosophers become kings, evil, all evils will cease from the human race.

So this much is clear: if we want to have the greatest possible clarity about what is going on before our eyes, we have to dig in and go back to the thought of the past. Are we then to say that the radical change within philosophy, political philosophy, is at the bottom of what is going on today in Vietnam and in Selma, Alabama?[xii] I'll read to you another text

[xi] See Tocqueville, *L'Ancien régime*, part 3, chapter 1.
[xii] In March 1965, civil rights protesters marched from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, to support the voter registration drive of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. The

which I brought with me, and this is Karl Marx, from the *German Ideology*; I have it here only in German, unfortunately:[xiii]

"The fundamental thing is of the life forces [the social and economic forces—LS], also the formations of thoughts in the brains of men are necessary sublimations of their life forces, which is, of their material life forces [meaning concerned with tangibles—LS] which can be studied and observed empirically and which are based on material presuppositions [material meaning, again, tangible—LS]. Morality, religion, metaphysics, and other ideologies cease to have the appearance of independence. They have no history. They have no development but men who develop their material production and their material exchange change together with that also their thoughts and the product of their thoughts. It is not consciousness which determines life, but life determines consciousness**.** [You may here replace "consciousness" by "thought." It is not thought which determines life, but life determines thought. Now let me see.—LS] Wherever speculation, metaphysics, stops, namely, when we come to real life, the real positive science begins, the presentation of the practical activity of the practical process of development of men. The mere phrases of consciousness stop; genuine knowledge must take their place. Independent philosophy loses its medium of existence at the same time that this presentation of reality comes to the fore."

You all know these, but I thought I should remind you of the very formulations of Marx. Philosophy is only a weak reflex of socioeconomic changes, and this view has of course had a terrific success beyond Marxism itself. But is it an accident that such reflexes are produced? Not at all. Marx says it is necessary. Man is, after all, strange as it may sound, a thinking animal: he cannot help producing these foggy notions in his brain. Yes.

Very well. How do we know that the philosophies are mere reflexes of the socioeconomic process? With all due respect for Marx, his saying so doesn't settle it. I discussed in an earlier seminar a detailed study by a Marxist—I think I can say this without any hesitation, I am sure he is not a card-carrying communist or anything like that—Macpherson's book on possessive individualism;[xiv] he means chiefly Hobbes and Locke. We discussed it at some length. Now he,[xv] following the Marxist principle but carrying it through in a way which is not ordinarily carried through by Marxists, observes contradictions in the doctrines, say, in the Hobbean doctrine, and asserts that this contradiction can be explained only by the fact that Hobbes identified society with capitalist society. Here we see the dependence of a philosophy on a specific stage of society. Well, I do not wish to assert my view of Macpherson's proof; I would only say:

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group was blocked at the start of the march in Selma by Alabama state troopers and local police, who tear-gassed the marchers and beat them with clubs.

[xiii] Karl Marx, *Die Deutsche Ideologie*, in *Werke*, bd. III (Berlin: Dietz, 1969), 26–27. Strauss's translation.

[xiv] C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*. (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1962). See also Strauss's review, reprinted in *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 229–31.

[xv] "He" is Macpherson.

All right, let us see. As Socrates used to say: Nothing like having another look at it. In order to prove the Marxist interpretation of the history of thought we have to begin with studying the doctrines as such, the manifest things as that which is first for us. Even if Marx is right that it is not the first in itself, that the first in itself are the socioeconomic conditions. But Marx doesn't claim that he had the divine revelation; he claims that this is a matter which can be rationally decided. Let us do that. I believe this simple reasoning is unimpeachable: that even if Marx were right it would be absolutely necessary to test it; and to test it would mean to study the history of thought in its own terms. And now there is a very simple further step. If we have to study these doctrines, we must study them properly and not in a glib, brash manner: properly, exactly, carefully.

I will give you another example[89] rather far remote from what we are reading this quarter, but because the principle is truly universal. One of the most discussed classics of political philosophy in this country is Locke's *Civil Government*, but very, very few students of Locke's *Civil Government* ever study the *First Treatise*. [As] you know, the book consists of two parts: the well-known positive work is the second; the first is a critique of Filmer. But Locke himself says right at the beginning of the work that—but it's too long to read.[90] He says that the whole *Second Treatise* is based on the argument of the *First*. How can one neglect it? That no one today is interested in divine right of kings (there are no longer any kings around to speak of) doesn't mean that it was not of crucial importance to Locke. I regard this as absolutely elementary. And I hope you see that point, that if it is for one reason or another necessary to study Locke—if, if, if—but if it is, then one has really to make an effort to understand Locke and not a figment of our imagination, which means [a] Locke who doesn't care, who is in no way interested with the issue of divine right.

So this is I think a good starting point: we must study carefully. But here a great difficulty arises. What degree of care? Does it make sense to apply the same degree of care in the case, say, of a pamphlet printed in a revolutionary, exciting epoch which was already of no importance the next day, or a book of this magnitude? A superficial and narrow pamphlet doesn't deserve the care which a profound and deep work deserves. And then there is another difference which is also important. If we limit ourselves only to the worthwhile books, there are books which set forth the doctrine in a straightforward manner. There is Hegel, and a few other writers—and John Stuart Mill, of course. But there may also be books which do not set forth the doctrine in a straightforward manner. Prior to examination we cannot exclude them.

Now this is clearly the case of Plato. In his dialogue the *Phaedrus*, which is the dialogue on erotic speeches, he speaks of the essential defect of writing.[xvi] Writing is a bad invention. Socrates didn't write books.[91] But Plato did write them: the dialogues. Hence I conclude the dialogues must be writings which are free from the defects of writing. What are the defects of writings? As Socrates says in the context, writings say the same things to all readers. And the implication is [that] writings should not say the same things to all readers. The Platonic dialogues are meant to say different things to different readers. But to speak with a view to the capacity, character, social standing, and all the other things

[xvi] *Phaedrus* 258e ff.

which may be important of a man *ad hominem*, with a view to the individual, this is one strict meaning of the word "irony" in Plato's language. So in this sense all Platonic dialogues are ironic, which doesn't mean of course the silly notion of irony that if you see a limping man and say: What a wonderful runner. That goes without saying. But if we start from this, then of course it is a very great question how can we find out what Plato meant in a nonironical way, i.e., what he would have told us if he had made sure that we are serious people sufficiently prepared. And the answer to that is given also in the *Phaedrus*. Plato speaks here of the thing which he calls "logographic necessity":[xvii] the necessity governing the writing of speeches. And of course books are only written speeches. In a good book, as Plato understands it, everything is necessary, and also the place where it occurs. Therefore these works have to be read with the utmost care; and therefore, if I seem to lose myself and to induce you to lose yourself in what at first glance looks like my rude observations, I can only ask you [to] be a bit patient. From my experience hitherto I have seen that it pays to be patient, but it takes some time sometimes to see it. I believe even if you would study now exactly the most exciting things in South Vietnam or in Selma, Alabama you would also have to develop a habit of patience to get the full truth out of it, and so therefore the request is not inequitable. I'm sorry.

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[1] Moved "simply"
[2] Deleted "he."
[3] Deleted "and."
[4] Deleted "I mean."
[5] Deleted "to every."
[6] Deleted "of philosophy."
[7] Deleted "to."
[8] Deleted "No, I think I have it 'For they are true laws–' S: 'No, the beginning of the speech of the Athenian.'"
[9] Deleted "The point…you see."
[10] Deleted "*which, for the polis.*"
[11] Deleted "And."
[12] Deleted "But what about."
[13] Deleted "This is."
[14] Deleted "this."
[15] Deleted "Navigation is a modest…."
[16] Deleted "be."
[17] Deleted "see he… you."
[18] Deleted "he."
[19] Deleted "that they have made."
[20] Deleted "the people worse."
[21] Changed "because after they have."
[22] Deleted "on."
[23] Deleted "in the *Apology* and *Crito.*"
[24] Deleted "so that if…."
[25] Deleted "as."
[26] Deleted "spoke that."
[27] Deleted "Such."
[28] Deleted "like."
[29] Deleted "consists of three parts…."
[30] Deleted "is a very."

[xvii] *Phaedrus* 264b7.

[31] Deleted “here is….”
[32] Deleted “So.”
[33] Deleted “These tools. I believe it is one the great virtues of state universities in my experience, that you never have troubles with chalk. They are very generous, state legislatures, much more than our [inaudible words] here. I don’t say that this is the only consideration [inaudible words] but it is not altogether negligible though it may be a low thing. [Laughter]”
[34] Deleted “taking.”
[35] Deleted “distinguishing.”
[36] Deleted “‘Is there anyone you can name...’ Socrates speaking. **LS:** Let me see. 503b-5. Yes, yes.”
[37] Deleted “Yeah.”
[38] Deleted “This is the same word which Plato makes ready—.”
[39] Deleted “Let’s [inaudible words]. So the.”
[40] Moved “ornament.”
[41] Deleted “assignment.”
[42] Deleted “of justice.”
[43] Deleted “to.”
[44] Moved “simply.”
[45] Deleted “So.”
[46] Deleted “But.”
[47] Deleted “of.”
[48] Deleted “this.”
[49] Deleted “The legislative art.”
[50] Deleted “but….”
[51] Deleted “That is not….”
[52] Deleted “One of the….”
[53] Deleted “this whole, …the.”
[54] Deleted “has to say so much.”
[55] Deleted “say….”
[56] Deleted “to.”
[57] Deleted “Philosophy…the philosopher must….”
[58] Deleted “take care”
[59] Deleted “punishing justly.”
[60] Deleted “I mean that was the implication for it. And.”
[61] Deleted “a.”
[62] Deleted “Well there are internal…I mean.”
[63] Deleted “which.”
[64] Deleted “then we have….”
[65] Deleted “And.”
[66] Deleted “Yeah?”
[67] Deleted “what… the question.”
[68] Deleted “of.”
[69] Deleted “them.”
[70] Deleted “this ingratiation with the *demos*… I mean.”
[71] Moved “only.”
[72] Deleted “in some—we regarding.”
[73] Deleted “in.”
[74] Deleted “know.”
[75] Deleted “Socrates’ teaching was too harsh in order to really to be effective in getting adopted.”
[76] Deleted “it is a matter….”
[77] Deleted “Let us not….”
[78] Deleted “No, no. No, I saw that. And….”
[79] Deleted “Well, to….”
[80] Changed “May be, that simply is not.”
[81] Deleted “are.”
[82] Deleted “Now.”
[83] Deleted “it becomes clear….”

[84] Deleted “the French Revolution was based on a new—.”
[85] Deleted “it.”
[86] Deleted “Now this has of course….”
[87] Deleted “the closest approximation to the new… well.”
[88] Deleted “And… but.”
[90] Deleted “All these premises—well, no.”
[91] Deleted “The dialogues….”

Session 4: April 7, 1965

The Turn to the *Protagoras* (309a-312b)

Leo Strauss: Well, let us then turn to the *Protagoras*. I warn you that we will be going into very great detail. [1]But I think after having given fair warning in advance, I am not obliged to repeat it all the time. Now let us begin at the beginning. The dialogue is called *Protagoras*. We must reflect for one moment on the title. Why is this title chosen? Of course, only those who have ever looked at the dialogue could possibly answer this question. Well, why is the dialogue called *Crito*? Yes?

Student: Well, it is a discussion Socrates has with Crito. This is mainly a discussion with Protagoras.

LS: But here you say "mainly." The *Crito* is not a dialogue mainly with Crito.

Student: Oh, no.

LS: So the general rule is that Plato never calls a dialogue with the name of Socrates, with one big exception.

Mr. Dry: The *Apology*.

LS: *Apology*, yes. The title is the *Apology of Socrates*. The name of Socrates occurs only in the context of *Apology of Socrates*, nowhere else. If there is a single interlocutor there is no question: it will be called after that single interlocutor: Crito, Euthyphro, and such. But if there are more than one, Plato had to make a choice. In the case of the *Protagoras*, the choice of Protagoras was a matter of course given the substance, because it is chiefly a conversation with Protagoras. The case of the *Gorgias* is somewhat different, because the conversation with Gorgias is only a very small part of the conversations in that book. But here it has a special reason because the whole dialogue, including the parts with Polus and Callicles, is addressed to Gorgias. So you see one has to make distinctions here. Now in the case of the *Laches*, for example, there are two equally outstanding men, Laches and Nicias. It is a great question why is it called *Laches*, since Nicias is much more of an intellectual figure than Laches, [who is] a kind of General Patton.[i] And Nicias is a very sophisticated man and yet it is called after that nonintellectual man. That would be a question which we cannot discuss here.

Now the dialogues have, in the tradition, subtitles. There is no proof that they stem from Plato, but some of them were already used by Aristotle. So some of them at any

[i] George Patton (1885–1945) commanded the US Seventh Army in North Africa and Sicily in WWII, then became commander of the Third Army in France.

rate probably go back to the immediate environment of Plato himself, and therefore we should treat them with some respect. Now what is the subtitle of the *Protagoras*?

Student: "The Sophists."

LS: "Sophists," yes. The *Gorgias* is called in the subtitle "On Rhetoric." The *Protagoras* is not called "On Sophistry." That is of some interest. Sophistry is surely not the explicit theme of the *Protagoras* as rhetoric is the explicit theme of the *Gorgias*. Now let us remind ourselves briefly of what the *Gorgias* says about the relation of sophistry and rhetoric. In 519c the sophists claim to be teachers of virtue. Now this implies in the context something of great importance. Who is supposed to be the teacher of virtue, according to the ordinary view? Because the sophists' is an unheard of claim, [namely], that there are some individuals who say: We are the teachers of virtue. Who raises the claim ordinarily?

Student: The laws.

LS: The laws, yes; that's the best answer. But still, what is the answer of Socrates given in the *Gorgias* as to who is the teacher of virtue or what?

Student: He is.

LS: Yes, in a sense. But he has a more, how shall I say, provisional answer.

Student: The statesman?

LS: No.

Student: The rhetorician?

LS: No. In that schema to which I have frequently referred, what is the art which makes the soul healthy, that teaches virtue?

Student: Legislation.

LS: The legislative art. But there is a great difference between the legislative art and the laws, because some laws may have been made by smatterers[ii] in the legislative art or by some poor apprentices. Therefore Socrates does not simply agree with the view that the laws are the teachers of virtue: only laws properly made, the province of the legislative art. This is one point. Sophistry of course is meant here in the *Gorgias* to be a perversion of the legislative art. But we see now the reason: the sophists claim to be teachers of virtue; the true teacher of virtue is the legislative art.

In *Gorgias* 520a to b, the sophist and orator are identical, or at least very close to each other. Callicles thinks that rhetoric is something altogether noble or resplendent but

[ii] That is, dabblers.

despises sophistry. In fact, Socrates says, sophistry is nobler than rhetoric, just as the legislative art is nobler than the art of judges or of judging. I do hope you remember that simple schema which Socrates gave in the conversation with Polus.Yes? Can you repeat it for the benefit of those who have forgotten it?

Student: For body and soul there is an art that builds up and an art that restores. For the body gymnastics builds up and medicine restores; for the soul legislation builds up and justice as punishment restores. And the shams also?

LS: Well, we need only the two. The legislative—

Student: The shams are sophistry for legislation and rhetoric for justice.

LS: Very good, yes. Now this is very strange, that Socrates says to Callicles that sophistry is nobler than rhetoric because it is a perversion of the nobler thing. That seems to be absurd, because the simple rule is that the corruption of the best is the worse. So the corruption of kingship, tyranny, is worse than the corruption of aristocracy, which is oligarchy. That is very strange. At any rate, if he takes his statement seriously and disregards the difficulty just pointed out, sophistry would deserve to a higher degree than rhetoric to be treated as such because it is more interesting, higher. But in the *Protagoras* it is not treated as such, as seems to be indicated by the subtitle "Sophists" and not "On Sophistry." But we have also seen in our survey of the *Gorgias* that there are various kinds of rhetoric, the lower one which is simply a perversion of something else and a very noble one; and then this would lead us to the question: Can there be a noble kind of sophistry? This question does not come up at all in this dialogue, but there is another Platonic dialogue explicitly devoted to the sophists, the dialogue entitled *Sophist* in which there is indeed a presentation of the noble sophistry. Seven definitions of sophistry are given, and the central one presents noble sophistry. We will later on see this more carefully.

Now the first point which must strike us at the beginning, if you look at the first pages, is that whereas the *Gorgias* is a performed dialogue—or as they say, a dramatic dialogue—the *Protagoras* is narrated, narrated by Socrates like some other dialogues, e.g., what is the most famous dialogue narrated? The *Republic*. But as you see if you look at the beginning of the *Protagoras*, the *Protagoras* is a narrated dialogue that is preceded by a very brief performed dialogue, very brief, between the narrator, Socrates, and a nameless comrade, *hetairos*. Now I translate it by "comrade" in order to make it clear that this is not a friend, although in loose usage the word can also be used for friend; and it also has certain political connotations: the crux of the oligarchs who were dissatisfied with the democracy were also called *hetaireiai*, comradeships. Well, "comrade" of course has in our time, as we all know, also a political connotation, but no longer on the part of oligarchs in the ancient sense.

A dialogue which comes closest to the *Protagoras* from this point of view is the dialogue *Euthydemus*, which is narrated by Socrates and preceded by a performed dialogue between Socrates and Crito. But it is not only preceded, but also interrupted

and concluded by that performed dialogue. So it's not exactly the same. And the interesting thing is that *Euthydemus* also deals with sophists but sophists of a particularly low order—clowns, almost. I mention in passing that the *Phaedo* and *Symposium* are dialogues narrated by men other than Socrates and [are] preceded by a performed dialogue between the narrator and someone else. So these are the closest dialogues akin to the *Protagoras* from this very external point of view.

Now let us turn to the beginning, and Mr. Reinken will do his duty to which he has been so well trained.

Mr. Reinken:
Com.: Where do you come from, Socrates?[iii] (309a)

LS: "From where do you come to sight, Socrates ?" It could suggest that he comes just sudden out from the earth! And you will see that in a sense that is true. And we will see later on that Socrates was in Hades: no wonder that he will come out from there. But this we cannot prove yet. Yes. Now begin.

Mr. Reinken:
Com.: From where do you come to sight Socrates? And yet I need hardly ask the question, for I know that you have been chasing the prime of youth—the prime of youth of Alcibiades. I saw him the day before yesterday, and he had got the beard like a man—and he is a man, as I may tell you in your ear. But I thought that he was still very charming.
Soc.: What of his beard? (309a)

LS: Now wait. It does not become entirely clear from the translation, I will say. You see that the comrade and, as we will see later, others are present. The comrade and the other silent comrades are intimates of Socrates. They know Socrates's private life and can talk to him about it, so much so that they even can blame him for some aspect of it—politely, of course, courteously, if he does something wrong. Socrates's choice of Alcibiades is sound in itself—I mean, there are no objections on the part of these upper-class men to Socrates's chasing the beauty of Alcibiades, but only one little point: Is he not a little bit too old for that? So he says, more literally stated: When I saw him the day before yesterday, he seemed to be beautiful, a beautiful man. But "man," yes? "To speak among ourselves." Yes. Now Socrates presents himself as the lover of Alcibiades and of philosophy in the *Gorgias*; here we see him only as the lover of Alcibiades. Socrates, we see, is a normal Athenian, only slightly abnormal: his love is slightly too old. What did you want to say?

Student: When they say love, they don't mean intimate friendship like Jonathan and David, do they? They mean homosexual love?

[iii] Readings are from Plato *Protagoras*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, revised by Martin Ostwald (Indianapolis, IN: Library of Liberal Arts/Bobbs-Merrill, 1956). In this translation, the parts spoken by "the friend" are indicated by "Com." for "comrade."

LS: I'm afraid so. [Laughter] This does not mean, however—that is a very hard question to—how shall I say? How corporeal it was, that is very hard to say, but this did exist in Athens less than in Sparta. Did you ever read the story of Alcibiades, which he tells at the end of the *Banquet*? Well, he wanted literally to sleep with Socrates—I mean, you know in the slightly metaphorical sense—and Socrates did not have the slightest inclination. I cannot apologize for that because I am not responsible for that. [Laughter] Yes?

Student: What did this do to the status of Socrates's control of his passions, and what he thought was naturally right?

LS: Socrates doesn't go in for that! If you want to use—the Greek word for what is now called in a very drastic way sexual intercourse is in Greek *synousia*, which means literally "being together" with someone. But being together with someone became very soon the term for "a lecture." [Laughter] How come? In other words, there is an intimacy of the mind, and this intimacy was something which Socrates cherished in a number of cases; in some cases he did not cherish it. And that it appeared externally to people who did not know Socrates as a desire for corporeal intimacy, he couldn't help; and he did not care particularly about it because it did not run counter to what then was regarded as feasible. But that is one of the most striking differences of course between classical Greece and the Bible; you know, according to Mosaic law that is an absolute abomination. But when you read the laws which Socrates presents or the Athenian Stranger presents in Plato's *Laws*, he is no less strict than Moses, you could say. So it is a kind of playing here with a socially accepted practice.

Student: But how can Socrates want a meeting or a being together with the mind of Alcibiades, when Alcibiades is thirteen?

LS: No, he must be older than thirteen at that time.

Student: His beard is beginning to appear . . .

LS: No, but I think it would be a bit older, sixteen or so. [Laughter] I have not made any study of that [laughter], of this question, but I believe he is somewhat older. Hippocrates even, who comes in, is older than thirteen, I would say.

Student: I've heard a very wise man say at the age of forty-four that he couldn't be the friend of his teacher who was about fifteen years older partly because of age and because of the wisdom his teacher had in excess of him. And we know from Aristotle that when one man has his goods in quantities greatly different from those of another man, they can't be friends. How can Alcibiades possibly be the friend of Socrates?

LS: You rush! Let us go step by step. For the time being we are only concerned with this limited question: How can Socrates tolerate it, that people make this supposition about him? One can say that Socrates apparently did not regard it as indispensable on

every occasion to disapprove of mores which he regarded as fundamentally questionable. And after all, in every society there are mores which are questionable from a very severe point of view, not only the sphere of sex but also in other things. And that is then sheer pedantry; Socrates would do it on the proper occasion. Yes?

Student: From the point of view of economy, be it dramatic economy or philosophical, why does he put it in, if it's such a normal thing? He makes much ado over it.

LS: I beg your pardon?

Same Student: Plato makes such a point of this. It's not economical, if it's a normal thing.

LS: No. Because, as is indicated by this stubborn meaning of the word *synousia* "being together," this becomes of course a symbolism. For example, in Aristophanes's[iv] speech in the *Banquet*, which is based on Aristophanes's plays, love of young men was regarded as more political with relation to the *polis* and to the higher things than love of women. That had to do with a fundamental question: the estimation of the two sexes. Generally speaking, the female sex—I apologize to the ladies—was regarded in former times as inferior to the male sex. And therefore, for example, that led to the very term "paternal power" instead of "parental power." This was pointed out so much by Locke, this point. The Bible says "honor father and mother" and not merely "honor the father"; but still, that people spoke ordinarily of paternal power was based on the excellency of the male sex, [2][while] in individual cases of course it could happen that the mother is a much superior version than the father, but this was somehow [LS chuckles] an unnatural situation, that the woman should really be able to control the household. Now this leads to all kinds of deeper questions, and therefore Plato's suggestion in the *Republic* that the two sexes should be equal is a very great paradox and is treated as such in the *Republic*. Now, that women should be kings or rulers as well as men: if we look at the history of mankind up to the present day, taking into consideration facts which Plato did not know, Plato has been borne out to some extent. There have been some famous female rulers: Catherine the Great, Elizabeth I, and some others; and in business, which is related to politics somehow, there are also very great businesswomen. But the question, in other words, the notion of female rulers is not absurd, as Plato says.

But what about the other side, female philosophers? Now if you look at the history of philosophy and look at the galaxy of men who surely belong to the top shelf, they are all men. Poets are a different story, but in philosophy that is so. When I explained this once to a professor of philosophy at another university he said: But what about Susan Stebbing? And I only said: I'm sorry I forgot her. Susan Stebbing was a British logician, I think quite a respectable woman,[v] but of course she herself would not

[iv] Strauss says "Alcibiades" but then corrects himself.
[v] Lizzie Susan Stebbing (1885-1943), English logician and author of *A Modern Introduction to Logic* (1931) and *Philosophy and the Physicists* (1937).

claim that she would belong to the top shelf. So you have to take this broader question into consideration: the male sex is the one more related to the common concerns—politics in the first place, and wisdom of governance above all—and this is somehow mirrored on a comical level in everyday life. Does it make sense?

So to come back here to the point, Socrates presents himself here not as the sole true statesman or the other things we have seen in the *Gorgias*, nor as he had presented himself in the *Apology*, as a man with the mission, but as a practically normal Athenian, only, as I said, slightly abnormal because Alcibiades is slightly too old. Now how does Socrates get out of that fix?

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: What of his beard? Are you not of Homer's opinion, who says: "Youth is most charming when the beard first appears"? And that is now the charm of Alcibiades. (309a-b)

LS: Yes. So now Socrates proves his complete normality or [correctness][vi] by the authority of Homer. Homer has said that this particular age when the beard begins to sprout is the most charming age. Now the saying is applied in Homer to Hermes, the god Hermes. Alcibiades has the peculiar charm of Hermes, the god of the thieves, among other things. I saw that Alcibiades was used as a model for statues of Hermes, and he was thought to be involved in the mutilations of the Hermes statues in 415. Now this 415 is much later than the dramatic date of this dialogue, but of course Plato wrote this much later. But it must make dramatic sense, and the dramatic explanation would be that Socrates represents a divination: his *daimonion* could very well have anticipated that this model for Hermes was dissatisfied with statues not devoted to him but to Hermes. But this is only a joke.

Now the words to which he alludes occur twice in Homer, once in the *Iliad* and once in the *Odyssey* in book 10; and in the quotation in book 10, this passage occurs shortly before the sole mention of nature which ever occurs in Homer. In this passage, Hermes teaches Odysseus the nature of an herb. I raise this question: Could Hermes, like Alcibiades, be by any chance the teacher of Socrates? This would of course presuppose that just as Alcibiades is Hermes-like, Socrates is Odysseus-like. That is an open question. I would not raise this question if I had not some reason, some suspicion that later it will be suggested that Socrates is, in a way, in this dialogue an Odysseus.

So at any rate, Socrates has refuted the charge that he did something abnormal by the authority of Homer. Now what does the comrade say?

Mr. Reinken:
Com.: Well, and how do matters stand now? Have you been visiting him? and what are his feelings toward you? (309b)

[vi] Strauss says "correctitude"; "correctness" has been supplied by the editor.

LS: He says: And how is the youth disposed toward you? Now you see the comrade is beaten. He calls Alcibiades now a youth and no longer a man. Otherwise he returns to his initial question: Do you come from him? But he is no longer as certain as he was at the beginning that Socrates comes from Alcibiades as a matter of course. It is now a real question. Accordingly, he adds now a second question: How is Alcibiades disposed toward you? Because if it is not so certain, maybe you had some lovers' quarrel in the meantime. Good. Now how does Socrates reply?

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: Good, I thought, and especially today, for I have just come from him, and he has been helping me in an argument. But shall I tell you a strange thing? I paid no attention to him, and several times I quite forgot that he was present. (309b)

LS: Yes. Now Socrates answers, first, the second question, namely, how Alcibiades was disposed towards him, and then the first, whether he comes from him. Alcibiades's disposition toward Socrates is unchanged, so why should he not come from him? But strangely, Socrates's disposition toward Alcibiades has changed, at least for the time being. Socrates barely noticed him, and this of course is a very remarkable, big event, which if there had been someone like Walter Winchell[vii] in Athens [laughter] . . . Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Com.: What is the meaning of this? Has anything happened between you and him? For surely you cannot have discovered a fairer love than he is, certainly not in this city of Athens. (309c)

LS: Yes, "certainly not in this city." So they ask in a perfectly proper way. What an extraordinary event! The biggest news in town! The only possible explanation of course is that Socrates has met some youth still more beautiful than Alcibiades. But there is no more beautiful youth in Athens than Alcibiades, perhaps not even in the world. Now—

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: Yes, much fairer.
Com.: What do you mean? Athenian[viii] or a foreigner?
Soc.: A foreigner. (309c)

LS: So Socrates did meet someone more beautiful than Alcibiades, but indeed not an Athenian; therefore the reputation of Alcibiades as the most beautiful young man in Athens is unimpaired. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Com.: Of what country?
Soc.: Of Abdera.

[vii] Walter Winchell (1897–1972), American journalist who pioneered the "gossip column."
[viii] In the translation: "a citizen."

Com.: And is this stranger really in your opinion a fairer love than the son of Cleinias? (309c)

LS: The son of Cleinias is Alcibiades. The comrade is incredulous, as you see from his last speech. And so beautiful did that stranger seem to be to you, so that he came to sight, which also connotes the meaning of "seeming," as more beautiful than the son of Cleinias. So in other words, it is possible that Socrates was under an optical illusion by believing he had seen someone more beautiful. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: And is not the wiser always the fairer, sweet friend? (309c)

LS: Now, how should the wisest—[*to sophōtaton*] [in the] neuter—appear to be more beautiful? We will come to speak of that word later. It is clearly not strange that Socrates paid no attention to Alcibiades, because the most wise is bound to be more beautiful than Alcibiades. The neuter is important: he doesn't say the wisest man, because the wisest is not necessarily a human being; it may be a *logos*, speech, and this might appear to be wiser. The adjective which he uses here in addressing him, *makarie*, first of all underlines the fact that the comrade remains nameless, as it were. Socrates knew of course his name, but the mere fact that his name is never used reminds of the fact that he remains nameless. It means, literally translated, "you blessed one," but it has of course now sunk down and does not have the full meaning. I would suggest that we [say, to] understand it, "how blessed you are" by virtue of the fact that *you* are wise. That is obviously ironical. Now let us read the next speech.

Mr. Reinken:
Com.: But have you really, Socrates, met with some wise one? (309c)

LS: Now wait. The position is very remarkable here: Did you meet some—now how shall we translate it? The stranger admits without difficulty—that is important—that the wisest thing is more beautiful than mere beauty, and in particular then the mere beauty of Alcibiades. I would say what he implies here, because he uses wise in the positive not in the superlative, is [that] we—you, Socrates, and I—are of course not wise. Socrates is not wise. That is what is implied. "You have met a wise man?" This is a rarity. They do not belong to this group of people. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: Say rather, with the wisest of all living men, if you are willing to accord that title to Protagoras.
Com.: What! Is Protagoras in Athens?
Soc.: Yes, he has been here two days.
Com.: And do you just come from an interview with him? (309d)

LS: Let us stop here. Now the comrade does not know that Protagoras is in town, obviously; and Socrates not only does know it, but has already met him. It is safe to

conclude that Socrates is much more of a "quote intellectual" than the comrade. He knows of the movements of this famous man and much earlier than they do. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: Yes, and I have said and heard many things. (310a)

LS: You see he says "said" first before he heard. He emphasizes the fact that he has spoken in the being-together with Protagoras. He thus emphasizes the difference between himself and the comrades who only listened, as will become quite clear from the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
Com.: Then, if you have no engagement, please do sit down right here and tell me about your conversation— (310a)

LS: Yes, but the word used is *synousia* or "being together," which as you see has here indeed the meaning of conversation, but it has this ambiguity which I pointed out. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Com.: and my attendant here shall give up his place to you. (310a)

LS: The meaning of course is . . . "Why do you not tell to us"—which means there are a number of people present, just as there are a number of people present in the conversation with Protagoras, as we shall see soon. And from this we learn already one point: that in the conversation immediately following with Hippocrates, which is in the center of the dialogue, [Socrates is *alone* with one man]. Because first there is the initial conversation with the comrades, then the conversation with Hippocrates, and then the conversation which makes up the bulk of the work with Protagoras. The central one is that with Hippocrates and this is the dialogue where Socrates is *alone* with one man, whereas he is together with many in the first and the third. It is clear that the comrade and the others will only hear the story; they will not speak. He is eager to hear, obviously—of course, since he is a polite man—unless Socrates is detained. Then he naturally would forego the pleasure of hearing him. Yes, and Socrates?

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: To be sure; and I shall be grateful to you for listening. (310a)

LS: Yes. Socrates is eager to tell, and they are eager to hear, and he is of course not detained. Now in order to understand that, let us read the very end of the dialogue.[3]

Mr. Reinken:
[*Protag.*:] Socrates, I am not of a base nature, and I am the last man in the world to be envious. I cannot but applaud your energy and your conduct of an argument. As I have often said, I admire you above all the men I meet, and far above all men of your

age; and I dare say that I would not be surprised if you were to become one of those who are distinguished for their wisdom. Let us come back to the subject at some future time of your choice; at present we had better turn to something else. [*Soc.*:] By all means, I said, if that is your wish; for I too ought long since to have kept the engagement of which I spoke before, and only tarried because I could not refuse the request of the noble Callias. So the conversation ended, and we went our way. (361d-362a)

LS: So what about this engagement of Socrates? That was a white lie. Socrates had plenty of time, but immediately after having left the conversation with Protagoras he tells this story of the conversation with Protagoras. Socrates is not busy in any way; his leisure is infinite. Of course, it also shows incidentally the tremendous memory of Socrates, that he can tell the whole conversation with all its incidental details as it happened. Memory is regarded very highly by Plato, as you know from the *Republic* and other places. Mr. Levy?

Mr. Levy: Why did you mention a few minutes ago that the conversation with Hippocrates was the only one Socrates had alone talking to somebody else and was the central conversation? Why was that important, that it was the central conversation? You had mentioned something about the center . . .

LS: I know. This is a good question, and I shall be glad to answer it, because it gives me an opportunity [LS laughs] for displaying my ignorance. The importance of the center I know only empirically in the good old sense of the word "empirically," meaning I know the fact without knowing the reason. That is what it means, "empirically." I just stumbled on it, and was amazed by it, and I don't know why. Now I learned this for the first time when I observed it in some passages in the first books of Plato's *Laws*, when he enumerated three things which seemed to be presented in an order of descent: one, two, three. And number two proved to be most important. And I took of course for granted that number one was most important because it is higher in rank; and then I said that it seems that what is in the center is most important, which doesn't mean most important absolutely—because it was clearly not most important absolutely in this case—but in the context. And this has been confirmed in my studies of Plato, of Xenophon, and of Thucydides, and quite a few other ancient and even later writers. There is never any reason given, but I came across some indirect reason. For instance, in some late writings on forensic rhetoric, they use this rule, they suggest this rule: If you defend a fellow against an accusation, you bring in his weak spots in the center, because at the beginning all people are attentive and at the end, as everyone who has ever given a lecture knows, when people are sound asleep and you say: "Now I come to my conclusion," they awaken. [Laughter] And therefore when they listen, you speak of his strong sides, and when they are asleep you speak of his weak sides and try to make the best of it.

And there is another thing. In Xenophon's remarks about tactics, military tactics in the strict sense—how to build up a fighting unit—the good, brave men come in the front line and in the rear, and the cowards in the middle: it's the same principle,

because they can't be trusted [4][not to] run away. In other words, this means, in the first place, the weakest things come in the middle. That is common to both tactics and forensic rhetoric. And which are the weakest in the broader sense? Those which are least easily publicly defensible. They may be much higher in rank. And then of course after this has become an established thing, then it so to speak lives on its own power, and you make it a rule to do that. There are minor difficulties. For example, if the things enumerated consist of an even number, then it is obvious you have to take the two central ones as important: if there are ten, they must be five and six, and so on. This is the thing which I can only say I have found very helpful in many cases. I would not start building an argument about it, but if I find something very strangely in the middle, I would keep it in mind and see whether something will not turn up which gives me some light. It is a heuristic principle, not something which you can mechanically use. Yes?

Student: Aristotle's reason for putting the earth in the center of the universe was that this position . . . must be such an important position, I think he said, and cannot be reserved for anything else but the most important body. . . .

LS: And also generally speaking the link between two things. Well, if you accept that the link between two extremes is of course also in the middle, I know that, but these are then the most important things—the most important absolutely, I mean.

Student: I don't see why he says the earth must be in the center because it's the most important. To update it you must put the earth . . .

LS: Yes, that's true. Well, I have not considered that and I have not ever been induced by anything I saw to think of that, but maybe it is important. But these things from forensic rhetoric and tactics I observed and I have been concerned since with other things. So let us read the end now again of this dialogue with Hippocrates. "And I will thank you if you listen." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: And I am grateful to you for listening.
Com.: Thank you, too, for telling us.
Soc.: That is thank you twice over. (310a)

LS: Yes. Well, the thanks, the grace—in Greek, *charis*—will be twofold.[ix] Now there comes a story. We have seen by looking at the end of the dialogue that the conversation with Protagoras is unfinished. We will see it later more clearly. And it is unfinished not through Socrates's fault but because Protagoras is exhausted or tired.

Now from this brief conversation with the comrade, you see that Socrates's narrative is voluntary to the highest degree. He is eager to tell. We will see that his conversation with Protagoras is compulsory to the extent that he is compelled by Hippocrates, this young man, to go with him to Protagoras. And this is quite

[ix] Mr. Reinken resumes reading at this point but Strauss interrupts him.

interesting, that a dialogue may be compulsory and yet the report about it may be voluntary. I believe [that] you all have observations of this kind to make from time to time, that you were compelled to have a conversation that you did not enjoy at all, but later on it was exhilarating to tell [about] it. It can happen. You see also that the comrade asks Socrates to take the place of the attendant—of the slave, of course—[5]of a social and intellectual inferior. That is suggested.

Now to summarize a point: this prooemium, as we call it, tells us to whom, i.e., to what kind of people, the *Protagoras* is narrated. There is a difference between the men addressed by Socrates within the dialogue and the men addressed by the dialogue. Is that not clear? Now the men addressed by the dialogue are in a sense, of course, we too, i.e., the men addressed by a published written dialogue are the readers also. The addressees of Socrates and the addressees of Plato are not necessarily identical. If you take the *Crito,* the addressee of the *Crito* in the *Crito* is Crito, of course, but also the *Crito* is addressed to us. And if the narrator of the dialogue and the chief interlocutor of the dialogue—Socrates, I mean—are identical, then the difference is blurred but nevertheless still visible. Now to what kind of man is the dialogue told? We have made some observations about that comrade. He is obviously friendly to Socrates. How deep that friendliness goes we are unable to figure out, because we have not seen them in a tough situation. He is an admirer of Alcibiades's beauty, not entirely uncritical in regard to Socrates. For example, Socrates loves Alcibiades and Alcibiades is a bit too old, and he says so! He is eager to listen to speeches but otherwise rather nondescript. This is in a way the typical reader of the *Protagoras*.[x] At any rate, the beginning of the *Protagoras*, in contradistinction to the beginning of the *Gorgias,* shows us Socrates in deep peace with the world, as you have seen: no difficulties. The *Gorgias* begins with the words: "fight and battle." Nothing of this kind here. In deep peace with the world: in other words, sound asleep. That is the transition to what we are going to read now.

The conversation with Hippocrates which begins now and goes to 314c leads to the result that Hippocrates accompanies Socrates to Protagoras, just as Chaerephon accompanied Socrates to Gorgias. More precisely, whereas Socrates goes to Gorgias spontaneously—he is eager to talk to him—he goes to Protagoras for the sake of Hippocrates, [having been] compelled by Hippocrates. One can tentatively say the *Protagoras* is devoted to the higher theme, sophistry, but there Socrates goes with the lower companion. Chaerephon is a mature man, an old friend of Socrates. And the *Gorgias* has a lower theme but the companion is higher. Whether this means anything, whether it is even completely true, we must see from the sequel. Now let us read the beginning.

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: Last night, or rather very early this morning— (310a)

LS: Yes, let us stop here for one moment. Now very early in the morning something happened, and we are told everything, what happened from this moment on until now

[x] Strauss says "*Gorgias*," evidently a misstatement.

when he tells the story to the comrades. The result is very simple: What has Socrates done from the early morning until now?

Student: He has been talking.

LS: Talking, talking, talking! Nothing else. Good. And this, incidentally, to come back to the symbolism of the sexes: Which is the sex sometimes accused of . . . [laughter]—well, you know what it is. Now from this point of view, the philosopher was much closer to the female sex than the male sex. Now the philosophers sit at home and talk like women; men go out into the marketplace, and war, and other manly pursuits. Good. Now begin again, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:
Last night, or rather, very early this morning—

Could that be a reference to the two dreams, truth? The gate of horn and the gate of ivory?[xi]

LS: I do not know. Let us begin at the beginning so that we have a complete impression of the—

Mr. Reinken:
Soc.: Last night, or rather very early this morning, Hippocrates, the son of Apollodorus and the brother of Phason, gave a tremendous thump with his staff at my door. Someone opened to him, and he came rushing in and bawled out: Socrates! Are you awake or asleep? [Laughter] (310a)

LS: Let us stop there. Now you see Hippocrates is obviously eager, lively, vehement. Socrates is awakened by the noise made by Hippocrates, but he did not hear who opened the door. It is really easy to enter Socrates's home, as you see. It is much more difficult to enter the place where Protagoras is, as we shall see later. There is a reference to the father and the brother of Hippocrates, which means it is hard to identify him. Maybe there was another Hippocrates son of Apollodorus, and he had to be distinguished from him by the addition of the brother. So he is, I would say, not a young man as well-known as is Alcibiades, for example. This much seems to be clear. Let us read the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
I recognized his voice, and said— (310b)

LS: He recognized his voice. Why is this important? Obviously because it's dark. It's all in the lines: it's dark. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

[xi] This is a question raised by Mr. Reinken and is not part of the reading.

Hippocrates, is that you? No bad news I hope? Good news, he said, nothing but good. Delightful, I said; but what is the news? And why have you come here at this unearthly hour? He drew nearer to me and said: Protagoras has arrived. Yes, I replied. He came two days ago; have you only just heard of his arrival? Yes, by the gods, he said, but not until yesterday evening.

LS: Now let us stop here. It is strongly emphasized throughout here that it is dark, so early did he come. And so his reaction when hears his voice: Some earthquake? No! Protagoras has come to Athens. Hippocrates had heard earlier of it than the comrade, as you see. The comrade has heard of it from Socrates. And so we conclude that Hippocrates is on a higher level of "quote intellectualism" than the comrade. Socrates is very sober, as he always is—"The fact that you have good news is no reason why you should disturb my sleep"—implying in the case of bad news, if you would need my help, it would of course be reasonable. Hippocrates, as you see, has a habit of command. It was quite a feat for him not to [have] come already last night, immediately after he heard it. He explains in the sequel why he did not come in the evening, as we shall see. This is a great, amazing thing that he came only at four o'clock in the morning, and not at midnight.

Mr. Reinken:
[*Hipp.*:] I had gone there[xii] in pursuit of my runaway slave, Satyrus, as I meant to have told you if some other matter had not come in the way. On my return, when after supper and when we were about to rest, my brother said to me: Protagoras has arrived. I was going to you at once, and then I thought that the night was far spent. But the moment sleep left me after my fatigue, I got up and came straight here. (310c-d)

LS: Yes, so we know now why he was so delicate. He explains, or one could almost say he apologizes for not having come straightaway in the evening. He also explains why he did not hear the news of Protagoras earlier: he was busy pursuing a runaway slave. He forgets to say whether he brought him back; that is anybody's guess. I would bet that he brought him back. He takes it for granted that Socrates is eagerly concerned with all his movements—"I forgot to tell you that my slave was runaway," as if Socrates was particularly eager [to know]. In other words, he is quite egocentric, as they say. Oenoe (there were more than one) may be the place of that name near the Boeotian border, which is about fifty miles away from Athens. He might have heard of Protagoras's arrival at once, but for his going after the fugitive slave. These two things seem to be incompatible somehow, the intellectual pursuit [LS chuckles] and the pursuit of a slave. He came back hungry, and only after the meal did the brother tell him because, as you can see, this young fellow with his animal spirits is hungry: no intellect, first a solid meal. Perhaps also his brother was not so excited about Protagoras as Hippocrates is, mentioning the many other news from town after they had spoken about the runaway slave and everything connected with that. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

[xii] That is, to Oenoe, as the context makes clear.

[*Soc.*:] I, who knew the eagerness and excitement of the man said—

LS: Yes, now let us stop. Here Socrates characterizes Hippocrates: "And I knowing his manliness." Manliness and his vehemence. *Ptoiēsis* is derived from a verb which means to terrify, to scare, to excite. So it is not mere excitement, it also has a tougher meaning—[to] terrify—and he has shown this clearly by his running after the runaway slave. You know, this was not a gentle master. He knows what belongs to him. Yes? Now begin again with the sentence.

Mr. Reinken:
I who knew the courage and vehemence of the man said: What is that to you? Has Protagoras robbed you of something?

LS: Literally, "Does Protagoras by any means wrong you?" A manly individual like Hippocrates is likely to be excited if someone wronged him. Now if he is excited about the arrival of Protagoras, it is likely that Protagoras [has] wronged him just as his slave had wronged him. It's perfectly natural. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
He replied, laughing: Yes indeed he has, Socrates, of the wisdom which he keeps from me. (310d)

LS: Yes, he says "by the gods." That is the second time he uses this very comprehensive sermon, "by the gods." And he says this laughingly. Now laughing is something which Socrates never does, or hardly ever. This is also in the *Republic*, for example: Adeimantus never laughs; Glaucon laughs; old Cephalus laughs. One can make a collection that is worthwhile. And one can say that it generally is a sign of animal spirits, to laugh (and smiling is something different). And these animal spirits Hippocrates obviously has. He does not for one moment consider that Socrates might be wise or make other people wise. That's clear. That appears from this very question. "The only man to make me wise is Protagoras," which implies he doesn't expect anything of this nature from Socrates. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
But surely I said—

LS: No, no: "By Zeus." They should translate this more literally.

Mr. Reinken:
By Zeus, I said, if you give him money and talk him into it, he will make you wise too. (310d)

LS: Good. The difficulties, Socrates says to him, can be overcome if you pay money to Protagoras; of course, you must also persuade him. You must also persuade him—which seems to imply that Protagoras doesn't take on everybody who brings him money; he is somewhat selective. Here occurs Socrates's first oath, which is much

less comprehensive than the oath used by Hippocrates. He swears only by Zeus. And in the immediate sequel you will see Hippocrates also swears only by Zeus, so in a way he is influenced by Socrates. The oaths in the Hippocrates section, in this very short section, are more numerous than all the oaths in the rest of the dialogue, which is a fact which I also give you first as a brute fact, empirically. Whether we can draw any conclusion from that fact is another matter. I believe we can, but we must make some progress first. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
By Zeus,[xiii] he replied. That it depended on that! He might take all that I have, and all that my friends have, if he pleased. (310d-e)

LS: I made a mistake regarding the oath. He says now: "Oh Zeus and the gods." After Socrates has emphasized Zeus, he makes now a distinction [LS chuckles] between Zeus and the other gods, whereas he used previously a sweeping formula. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
He might take all that I have, and all that my friends have, if he pleased. But that is why I have come to you now, in order that you may speak to him on my behalf, for I am young, and also I have not seen nor heard him (when he visited Athens before I was but a child), and all men praise him, Socrates; he is reputed to be the most accomplished of speakers. There is no reason why we should not go to him at once, so that we shall find him at home. He lodges, as I hear, with Callias, the son of Hipponicus; let us go. (310e-311a)

LS: So Hippocrates makes clear that it is not a matter of money only. Protagoras must also be persuaded, obviously because he knows Protagoras does not accept everyone. And Hippocrates [hopes or] takes it for [6]granted that Socrates, not Hippocrates, can persuade Protagoras to take Hippocrates on as a pupil. That is the function of Socrates, in his eyes.

The wisdom which Hippocrates admires is the wisdom of speaking. Yes? Protagoras is very clever in speaking. From Hippocrates's point of view, there is no difference between rhetoric and sophistry, as we have seen from the *Gorgias*, where the remark is made that they are identical or at least very close to each other. Now the so-called historical Protagoras,[7] I mean as distinguished from the Protagoras as a character in this play,[xiv] was the one who raised the claim that he can make the weaker speech the stronger (the phrase stems from Protagoras), which is of course part of rhetoric.[xv] Good. One thing we have already seen from this beginning: Socrates talks to Protagoras on behalf of Hippocrates, let us keep this in mind. And let us now read the sequel.

[xiii] In the translation: "Would to heaven"
[xiv] Strauss misspeaks and says "Hippocrates" instead of Protagoras here.
[xv] Consider Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, 2.24 (1402a24–29), where the phrase is attributed to Protagoras.

Mr. Reinken:
[*Soc.*:] I replied: Not yet, my good friend, the hour is too early. But let us rise and take a turn in the court and wait about there until daybreak. When the day breaks, then we will go. For Protagoras is usually at home, and we shall be sure to find him in, never fear. (311a)

LS: Protagoras stays most of the time inside so that they will catch him quite naturally inside, indoors. Socrates does not prevent Hippocrates from seeing Protagoras, but he silently teaches him somewhat better manners. Well, it's too early. Socrates knows Protagoras's habits, which means he knows Protagoras. At the beginning, he says: Let us not yet go *there*—thither, *ekeise* in Greek—which is very commonly used also in the sense of opposition to hither, meaning "in that life," to Hades. We will see later on that this is a reasonable explanation of this fact. And you see the emphasis on indoors by the repetition. Protagoras is not the outdoor type to which Hippocrates rather would belong: I mean, pursuing his runaway slave, that's a great thing. Protagoras is more one of these womanish men who sit indoors and talk all day. Socrates says: Yes, I will introduce you to Protagoras, but not now; it's too early. And then he uses the time which he gains this way for warning Hippocrates of the danger to which he exposes himself by becoming a pupil of Protagoras. And now let us read that.

Mr. Reinken:
Upon this we got up and walked about in the court, and I thought that I would test the strength of his resolution. So I examined him and put questions to him. (311a-b)

LS: Now let us stop here. This is quite a little thing which we must keep in mind. Socrates tells us in the sequel the questions which he put to him and the answers which Hippocrates gave him, but if this were now a performed or a dramatic dialogue, how would this look? You would hear Socrates's question, Hippocrates's answer. What would you not hear?

Mr. Reinken: Socrates's intention.

LS: Exactly: why he phrases his question. He says he wanted to test the strength of Hippocrates. This is the great virtue of the narrated dialogue. In a narrated dialogue, you can say things which cannot be said in a performed dialogue. Socrates tells "us," in quotation marks, what he could not have said to the interlocutor. And that point is the great virtue of the narrated dialogue. Yes? Now what does he ask him?

Mr. Reinken:
Tell me, Hippocrates, I said, as you are going to Protagoras and will be paying your money to him, what is he to whom you are going and what will he make of you? If, for example, you had thought of going to Hippocrates of Cos, the Asclepiad, and were about to give him your money, and some one had said to you: You are paying money to your namesake Hippocrates, O Hippocrates; tell me, what is he that you give him money? How would you have answered?

I should say, he replied, that I gave money to him as a physician.
And what will he make of you?
A physician, he said.
And if you were resolved to go to Polycleitus the Argive, or Pheidias the Athenian, and were intending to give them money, and some one had asked you: What are Polycleitus and Pheidias, and why do you propose to give them this money? How would you have answered?
I should have answered, that they were sculptors.
And what will they make of you?
A sculptor, of course. (311b-c)

LS: Now let us stop here. We have an interesting parallel to this story in the *Gorgias* in 447d, where [8]Chaerephon [9]asks Socrates, "What should I ask?"[xvi] Socrates says, "What he is." "How do you mean?" "Well, if he happened to be a maker of shoes, he would of course reply that he is a shoemaker, or do you not understand what I mean?" "I understand, and I will ask him." "Tell me, Gorgias," and so on. Then he knows. In other words, in the case of Chaerephon only one line is necessary to explain what he does. Here in the case of Hippocrates, a very long explanation is needed.

Now this is, I believe, the first case we have in this dialogue of a dialogue within the dialogue. You know that Socrates causes the illusion that someone else asks Hippocrates: If someone would ask you, and what would you reply to him? So you see Socrates not only does not tell Hippocrates that he is testing him; he also has the additional courtesy not to ask him questions. A third individual, nonexistent, created for the purpose by Socrates asks the questions. Is this clear? If he is embarrassed by the questions, he will not be embarrassed by Socrates but by this invisible, nonexistent third [person]. Is this point clear? That is the great advantage which this has. Yes. Good.

Now the examples which he takes are medicine and sculpture, as you have seen, and these are high arts, highly respected arts. It is not absurd to think that someone like Hippocrates might wish to become a physician or a sculptor. Now there are three such artisans mentioned: Hippocrates from Cos, Polycleitus from Argos, and Pheidias from Athens. In all cases the town where the men came from or where they live is added. Why does he do it? In the first place, it has a very simple reason. This fellow himself is called Hippocrates—which Hippocrates are you speaking of? So he could be identified only by mentioning the hometown. But this was probably not necessary in the two other cases, of Polycleitus and Pheidias. Why does he do that? I would say [that] in cases of this kind, whether these men are strangers or citizens is not very important, if they know their art very well. [10]Protagoras of course is a stranger; we must never forget that. Conceivably there might also be an Athenian who might make Hippocrates wise, or wiser at any rate than he is. This notion never occurs to Hippocrates. In other words, he does not expect to learn anything of any importance from Socrates. That is perfectly clear throughout. In a parallel in the *Gorgias*, in 484b, the examples are medicine and painting. Now they are obviously very close,

[xvi] That is, Chaerophon asks Socrates what questions he should put to Gorgias.

medicine being the same and painting [being] very close to sculpture. Medicine deals with the human body, and painting and sculpture imitate the human body but in different ways, two-dimensionally and three-dimensionally. That makes quite a difference between the two things. But we're going to another point. Now is there anything else which strikes you hitherto? Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken: Yes, I have other reasons for giving money to a physician, and even to a sculptor. And in the first case it struck me stronger that it might be a nobler, a more suitable concern, going to a physician to be made well. He wants to go to Protagoras to acquire a craft, namely, speeches. It's Protagoras's effective speaking he admires. He wants to be like Protagoras; he doesn't really want to be made wise, just as he doesn't want to go to a physician to be made well.

LS: Yes, but still, if you go—I see. But is this necessary to insert here? I mean, he wants to become wise, i.e., to become a good speaker, and therefore he wants to learn; and therefore he considers only the case of your going to a physician in order to learn from the physician, not in order to be treated. Ya? Is this not the situation? Mr. Shulsky?

Mr. Shulsky: Would you say that in the case of his being made wise by Socrates, though, it would be more a case of his being treated than it is becoming like Socrates?

LS: I see. You would link this up with this point, that he does not even imagine that he could be helped by Socrates—

Mr. Shulsky: Well, that he doesn't imagine that what he needs—it isn't as if he were going to a doctor to become a doctor but what he needs is to go to some wise person to be treated rather than to be taught.

LS: Yes. Well, this is maybe what Mr. Reinken meant. Yes, Mr. Levy?

Mr. Levy: I notice that the town of every name but Protagoras's is mentioned. Socrates mentions Protagoras's town in the first dialogue, the first performed part of the dialogue. Is it possible, for one thing, that these towns have reputations to them . . . ? I heard that people from Abdera are supposed to be stupid.

LS: Well, it is by no means sure that Abdera had already this reputation at that time.[xvii] That's the reason why I disregarded it. Later on, yes, it was famous, but not yet. At the time it was best known, I think, as the hometown of Democritus the philosopher. Yes?

Mr. Levy: Another question. With the *Gorgias*, you mentioned that Polus is a Greek word for "colt." Does the name Protagoras have a Greek meaning?

[xvii] Inhabitants of Abdera had in late antiquity a reputation for being fools; the oldest collection of jokes that has come down to us, *Philogelos*, includes remarks about the stupidity of the Abderites.

LS: Yes. I can tell you that, it comes out very simply but it comes out much more beautifully when we come to his speech later on. I think jokes must only be told at the proper place. [Laughter] Good. Yes?

Student: What does it mean, the fact that Socrates volunteers the names of the towns to which these artists belong but he has to be asked to tell Protagoras's town, which also shows something about the difference between Protagoras and his art and these other people and their arts? Theirs was given voluntarily.

LS: No. This was different. They knew, of course, Protagoras. That was in the first conversation with the comrade. And Socrates says first he comes from Abdera and he has mentioned Protagoras. If he had spoken of Protagoras, it would not have been necessary to mention that he comes from Abdera.

Student: But he asks where he comes from.

LS: When he says "this beautiful being comes from Abdera," they do not for one moment think that it is old Protagoras because they do not connect beauty and wisdom. I do not know a convenient present-day example.

Student: Just a small point from the section right before that, where Socrates says that he is going to test Hippocrates—

LS: His strength; yes, firmness.

Same Student: Test his strength or firmness. Doesn't that imply bodily strength?

LS: Yes, primarily that would be strength, just as in English. But here at this point, in this connection it obviously means the firmness of purpose. Would he truly insist on going to Protagoras after he has been treated by Socrates? That is the point. Good. Now let us see, where do we go here? So Socrates prepares the thesis with these examples. But the physician and the sculptor are only examples for bringing out the radical difference between these respectable arts, medicine and sculpture, and the art of sophistry. That comes out in the sequel. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Well, now, I said, you and I are going to Protagoras, and we are ready to pay him money as a fee on your behalf. If our own means are sufficient and we can gain him with these, we shall be only too glad; but if not, then we are to spend the money of your friends as well. (311c-d)

LS: "Of the friends." It can also mean "of my friends" or "of our friends." In other words, this is the first warning shot. Hitherto it was perfectly clear that these examples were uninteresting, fundamentally because Hippocrates doesn't *dream* of becoming a physician or of becoming a sculptor. But here now it becomes serious.

We go there and pay money! [LS taps on the table] And not only a little bit, but perhaps we ruin ourselves and our friends together. So it must be truly worthwhile.

Student: Here he says: "If we persuade him with the money." The persuasion here would be with the money; the other part has dropped out, whether we can—

LS: Yes, sure. Well, in Greek the word bribing is called persuading with money, which is a perfectly intelligent expression. [Laughter] Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Now suppose that, while we are thus enthusiastically pursuing our object, someone were to say to us: Tell me, Socrates, and you, Hippocrates, what is Protagoras, and why do you propose to pay him money? How should we answer? I know that Pheidias is a sculptor, and that Homer is a poet, but what appellation is given to Protagoras? How is he designated?
They call him a Sophist, Socrates, he replied. (311d-e)

LS: Yes, "him" the man, in the sense of *hombre*, because he is really an outstanding personality. Yes, they call him a sophist. Yes? Next?

Mr. Reinken:
Then we are going to pay our money to him in the character of a Sophist?
Certainly.

LS: You see now Socrates and Hippocrates go together and pay together. That's clear. And they ask questions together. But this is all for Hippocrates's sake. There is this great difference between the two, although they do everything else together. To study with Protagoras is obviously very expensive, and the seriousness of purpose is measured by the amount of money they are willing to invest. I think this has not changed since. He drops now the physician, as we have seen, and adds the poet, *the* poet, which is also already now an indication that Protagoras's art is somehow not like that of the physician but an imitative art, as these other arts mentioned were. Yes. Now—yes, Mr. Hewitt?

Mr. Hewitt: Is there any other name that Hippocrates could have given Protagoras at this point between calling him a wise man and a teacher or a philosopher?

LS: Yes, but he surely knew quite well what in these circles Protagoras would be called. What a sophist *is* is another matter. You know, we have a beautiful present-day parallel: intellectual. What is an intellectual? I will take this up; we are compelled to take it up by the text. Let us only stop here for the time being—no, I think we should read a little bit more, two more pages. First he asked him: How would you call him, as you would know the answer in the case of the physician and the sculptor?—Sophist.—Now [11]if he would now ask you—you Hippocrates, no longer Socrates—in addition. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
But suppose a person were to ask you this further question: And how about yourself? What will Protagoras make of you if you go to see him?
He answered, with a blush upon his face (for the day was just beginning to dawn, so that I could see him): Unless this differs in some way from the former instances, I suppose that he will make a sophist of me. (311e-312a)

LS: Yes, this is of course a great moment. So the difference between the question regarding the sophist and the questions regarding the physician and the sculptor is the second half of the question—namely, what will become of *you*?—is to be answered by Hippocrates alone. He has no longer the support—they go together, they pay together [LS chuckles], but here he is entirely on his own. And here he begins to see the difficulty. He blushes. He would be *ashamed* to become a sophist like [Protagoras].[xviii] He is delighted to learn the art of teaching, but he would be ashamed to become a sophist. Whether Socrates would become ashamed or not, of course we cannot draw any conclusion about that because of the tremendous ambiguity of the word "sophist." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
By the gods, I said, and would you not—

LS: Now here you see, here Socrates begins with the swearing in this scene. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and would you not be ashamed to present yourself to the Hellenes in the character of a Sophist?
Indeed, Socrates, to confess the truth, I am. (312a)

LS: He swears by Zeus also: "By Zeus, if I should tell what I think." Socrates swears now first, and of course Hippocrates responds in kind. He now reminds Hippocrates of the gods, because there is some dubious relation between the sophist and the gods. [12][Protagoras] was known to have said that he does not know whether the gods are; the difficulty of the subject and the brevity of his life prevented him from finding out. And he was also driven out, expelled from Athens because of his alleged impiety. Socrates, however—that's important—Socrates suggests to Hippocrates that it is improper to be a sophist. Yes? The suggestion falls on very fertile soil, as Socrates suggested. Now let us read the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
But surely you mean, Hippocrates, that the instruction you will receive from Protagoras will not be of this nature, but rather that it will be like the instruction you have received when you got your elementary schooling, your lyre lessons, and your physical training. For you learn all that not in order to acquire a professional skill, which you would practice as a specialist, but to get an education as befits a layman and a freeman.

[xviii] Strauss says "Callicles," presumably a misstatement.

Just so, he said. And that, in my opinion, is a far truer account of the teaching of Protagoras. (312a-b)

LS: Let us stop here. This is what Hippocrates says, the last sentence. Now the context is this: the sophist is a low-class man. This is implied in Hippocrates's blushing. Now we have to consider that for one moment because in itself that is just a social prejudice. Actors and actresses were regarded in former times as the scum of society, and today they occupy the highest places, and so these are prejudices dependent on time and place, which we cannot take too seriously and which we cannot assume Socrates to have taken too seriously. Why are they so distrusted or disliked? Well, they are people who teach high things for money. That was the first reason. They are prostitutes. They prostitute their arguments and so on. But if we are honest, we must say they do not do anything worse than professors do. George Grote, in the famous *History of Greece*, made a strong point, that the terrible things said against the sophists in Plato are really unfair, and the worst things which they are accused of doing are the things which every MP does. And who could be more respectable in the eyes of George Grote than an MP?[xix]

Now let us look a bit more closely. Socrates does not teach for money, that's clear. That's the difference. But he lives, as he says in the *Apology*, in ten thousandfold poverty. We would probably say today in a millionaire's poverty. He has no visible means of support. But what is the economic basis of his life? After all, he must eat and drink, and he has children and a wife. Now this subject is discussed with the necessary delicacy in a dialogue properly entitled *Oeconomicus*, by Xenophon. I read to you only a short passage from this dialogue. Well, what is property, what is wealth? That is the question. Now wealth is the totality of useful things a man has. For example,

Soc.: Wealth is that from which a man can derive profit or benefit. At any rate, if a man uses his money to buy a mistress who makes him worse off in body and soul and estate, how can his money be profitable to him, obviously?
Critobulus: By no means, unless we are to maintain that the weed called nightshade, which drives you mad when you eat it, is wealth [which you also can possess—LS].
Soc.: Then money is to be kept at a distance, Critoboulos, if one does not know how to use it, and not to be included in wealth. But how about friends? If one knows how to make use of them so as to profit by them, what are they to be called?
Crit.: Money, by Zeus!"[xx]

So friends can be money. And this is very important for Socrates. In the *Apology of Socrates*—everyone remembers that scene—Socrates offers to pay a fine for his alleged crimes. But he ain't got no money. Who will give the money? His friends.

[xix] George Grote, *A History of Greece: From the Earliest Period to the Close of the Generation Contemporary with Alexander the Great* (1846–1856). "MP" stands for Member of Parliament, a position Grote himself held from 1832 until 1841.
[xx] Xenophon, *Oeconomicus* 1.12–14. Strauss's translation follows closely that of the Loeb Classical Library edition, translated by E. C. Marchant and O. J. Todd, with minor variations.

[We see] a similar scene in the first book of the *Republic* where Thrasymachus asks for money. Socrates says: I ain't got no money. Who will pay the money? Again, the friends. Why should it be more decent to be supported by one's friends than by one's students? Of course, one could say: What kind of friends, and what kind of students? That would obviously be the difference. I make this simple inference: Socrates's rejection of the sophists cannot be identical to the popular rejection of the sophists. He must have a somewhat different ground.

Now what is the difference between the philosopher and the sophist from Socrates's point of view? And I think we can say very simply this, provisionally but not misleadingly: the sophist is a kind of charlatan prompted by base ambition, very clever, a master of fireworks but who does what he does because he desires to make a splash. Democritus, the famous atomist, surely very different in his thought from that of Socrates and Plato, said of himself [that] he came to Athens and no one knew him, no one took any notice of him and it didn't disturb him particularly. Democritus was not a sophist. The philosophers are not charlatans. I would say that is an important point to make. And there is a very beautiful illustration of that in that work which comes closer to presenting a philosopher as charlatan than any other I know of, and that is Descartes's *Discourse on Method*, which is a very indescribably beautiful piece of writing, but one of its many charms consists precisely [in] that Descartes presents himself as a man who brings all benefits—you know, like a sophisticated crier at a fair: I can make you immortal with my pills [LS chuckles] and all kinds of other things. But he was obviously ironical; in other words, Descartes proves in a way that he is not a charlatan by presenting himself as a charlatan. Yes, and I suppose one can say in general that philosophers are not charlatans. [13]There are perhaps some borderline cases. One is a very famous contemporary case which I think we are not sufficiently familiar with one another so as to use that as an example; maybe later on on a provocation I will do it.

But to come back for one second to the text: Socrates has debunked the sophist. No decent man would seek to become a sophist. He has not debunked, of course, sophistry. On the contrary. Would a boy from a good family wish to become a sports teacher, a gymnastic teacher, a teacher of reading and writing? Of course not. And yet it was perfectly proper for him to go to school with these people. Why should he not go to school with the sophists just as he went to school with the gymnastic teacher, with the a teacher of reading, writing, and arithmetic? And never dreaming of course that he would exercise later such a profession, contrary to President Johnson, who does not blush at having been a simple teacher.[xxi]

The profession, say, of teaching these simple things may not become a private and free man—the two words are almost identical here, a man who leads a retired life and who is a freeman—but the teaching of it may very well be. Therefore there is hitherto no difficulty here, only Socrates reminded him of the fact that while he admires

[xxi] President Lyndon B. Johnson attended Southwest Texas State Teachers College, graduating in 1930. He taught at Pearsall High School in Pearsall, Texas and at Sam Houston High School in Houston, Texas before entering politics in the early 1930s.

Protagoras, he would never wish to be such a man, just as, say, in the last century or two centuries ago, a well-bred girl might admire an actress and of course never wish to become an actress. That is, I believe, the nearest example I can think of now from our—. This is clear. And Socrates doesn't leave it there but now raises the question: Is it as unobjectionable or simple to go to school with a sophist as it is to go to school with a teacher of the three arts? The answer is no. But we must now conclude.

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[1] Deleted "And that is…."
[2] Deleted "which"
[3] Mr. Reinken begins reading in the wrong place and Strauss corrects him. This exchange has been deleted from the transcript.
[4] Deleted "unless they"
[5] Deleted "to take the place"
[6] Deleted "hopes"
[7] LS says Hippocrates, evidently in error, both here and in the next clause.
[8] Deleted "Socrates says to"
[9] Deleted "asks him, namely, Gorgias"
[10] Deleted "if we generalize from that"
[11] Deleted "if someone"
[12] Deleted "Hippocrates"
[13] Deleted "and."

Session 5: April 12, 1965

Meeting Protagoras (312b-316c)

Leo Strauss: A reminder of the context. We came up to 312b6, I take it, and we will go on immediately after that brief reminder of which I spoke. Now I remind you of a few points. First of all, the dialogue consists of three parts. The first, the dialogue with the comrade, which is a report by Socrates on his conversation with Protagoras and on what led up to that conversation. Secondly, the conversation with Hippocrates, which is the only strictly private part of the *Protagoras*, leading up to Socrates's conversation with Protagoras.

Socrates goes to Protagoras not only in the company of Hippocrates, but also on Hippocrates's behalf, and we are in this section. Socrates had shown to Hippocrates that becoming a pupil of Protagoras differs from his becoming a pupil of a physician or a sculptor, because Hippocrates will not become a pupil of Protagoras in order to become himself a sophist. He will go to Protagoras rather in the way in which he went to the teacher in reading and writing and so on, namely, for the sake of education and not for the sake of acquiring an art which he would exercise and which would be the source of his livelihood. At this point we left off, and we continue at 312b7.

Mr. Reinken:
[*Soc*.:] I said: I wonder whether you know what you are doing?
And what am I doing?
You are going to commit your soul to the care of a man whom you call a Sophist. (312b-c)

LS: Yes, and man here also emphasized. *Hombre*. And in the original it is stronger: "to an '*hombre*,' as you say." "Who is a sophist?" Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And yet I hardly think that you know what a Sophist is; and if not, then you do not even know to whom you are committing your soul and whether the thing to which you commit yourself be good or evil.
I certainly think that I do know, he replied. (312c)

LS: "I believe to know." It is a bit weaker. "I believe indeed to know." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Then tell me what do you imagine a sophist is? (312c)

LS: Yes. Now Socrates draws his attention here to the risk—that's a new consideration, [the risk] involved in handing over one's soul to a sophist. In other words, there is a much

greater risk than to hand over I-do-not-know-what to one's teacher in reading and writing or in cithera playing. The fact that Hippocrates wishes to go to Protagoras for the sake of education as distinguished from a professional instruction makes his wish not less dangerous than if he were to go to become a sophist. Hippocrates is of course sure that he knows what a sophist is. Now let us see whether he does know.

Mr. Reinken:
I take him to be one who knows wise things, he replied, as his name implies.
And might you not, I said, affirm this of the painter and of the carpenter also? Do not they, too, know wise things? But suppose a person were to ask us: In what things is the painter knowledgeable? We should answer: In what relates to the making of likenesses. And similarly of other things. And if he were further to ask: In what branch of wisdom is the Sophist knowledgeable, and what is the manufacture over which he presides—how should we answer him? (312c-d)

LS: Now let us stop here. You will see here again a dialogue within the dialogue. Socrates and Hippocrates are both asked the question, and both are supposed to answer it. Now the two arts which are used as examples, painting and housebuilding: painting is defined as the making of images, and the making of images is of course very important for rhetoric, if of a different kind of image. Building, however, is not defined, but one knows [that] builders build houses; and houses refer to the *polis*, to the city consisting of houses, and therewith to the political art. So the relation of the rhetorical and the political art is here somehow implied. [1]But we understand the situation. The answer which Hippocrates has given is of course much too general: a sophist is a man and knower of wise things. Wise things are *sophai* in Greek; sophist belongs together; and this is naturally too general because there are so many kinds of wise things. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
How should we answer him, Socrates? What other answer could there be but that he presides over the art which makes men eloquent?

LS: "Clever at speaking, in speech."

Mr. Reinken:
Yes, I replied, that is very likely true, but not enough, for the answer begs a further question: Of what does the Sophist make a man talk eloquently? The player on the lyre may be supposed to make a man talk eloquently about that which he makes him understand—that is, about playing the lyre. Is not that true?
Yes.
Then about what does the Sophist make him eloquent? Must not he make him eloquent in that which he understands?
Yes, that may be assumed.
And what is that which the Sophist knows and makes his disciple know?
Indeed, he said, I cannot tell. (312e-313a)

LS: "By Zeus, I can no longer tell." Well, we see here he understands by a sophist a man who teaches you to become a good speaker, i.e., he identifies sophistry and rhetoric, which is in a way possible, as we have seen in the *Gorgias*, but in another way it doesn't suffice. The situation here is exactly like that in the *Gorgias*. The question is: Clever in speaking about what? How can he make you clever in speaking about medicine if he doesn't teach you medicine? And is it possible at all to make a man clever in speaking without making him clever in the knowledge of a specific subject matter? Only he is much briefer, because it was much easier to silence Hippocrates than Gorgias or Polus.

Hippocrates doesn't know what sophistry is, that's very clear; and yet he longs for it and at the same time he rejects it. He himself would never wish to become a sophist. Now the example is a cithera player or a player on the lyre. What does such a teacher teach? He teaches of course by means of words, but an art which produces not speeches but wordless sounds or, as we can also say, meaningful silence. I mean, because if it is not articulate language one can call it silence. When Hippocrates says here, at the beginning of the passage just read by Mr. Reinken, "What shall we say, Socrates? Except that he knows to make one clever in speaking," it is not always possible to say why he does he say here "O Socrates" and not there. But it is necessary to give some thought to it. The extreme cases which may clarify the situation are these: we know this from our own experience; when we talk we do not all the time address the interlocutor by his name. That has a special reason, of emphasis. Now the extreme cases and the clearest cases are these. If he says something outrageous and you want to bring him back to his senses, you say: But look, Mr. Miller! [LS pounds emphatically on table. Laughter.] Yes? Or the opposite case, which happens especially to men like Socrates, the interlocutor says that in order to kind of cry for help—"Stop, stop!"—when he is embattled by Socrates. Here it looks rather more like a call for help or an expression of uncertainty than the opposite, but this would need some more consideration. Now let us go on here. So we repeat: he doesn't know what sophistry is, and he wants yet to hand over his soul to a sophist, which is a risky thing. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Then I proceeded to say: Well, but are you aware of the danger which you are running in submitting your soul to him? If you were going to commit your body to someone who might do good or harm to it, would you not carefully consider and ask the opinion of your friends and kindred, and deliberate many days as to whether or not you should give him the care of your body? But when the soul is in question, which you hold to be of far more value than the body, and upon the good or evil of which depends the well-being of your all—then you never consulted either with your father or with your brother or with anyone of us who are your companions whether or not you should commit your own soul to this foreigner who has come. In the evening, as you say, you hear of him, and in the morning you go to him, never deliberating or taking the opinion of any one as to whether you ought to entrust yourself to him or not. You have quite made up your mind that you must by hook or by crook be a pupil of Protagoras, and are prepared to expend all the property of yourself and of your friends in carrying out this determination, although, as you admit, you do not know him and have never spoken with him; and you call him a Sophist, but

are manifestly ignorant of what a Sophist is; and yet you are going to commit yourself to his keeping. (313a-c)

LS: Yes. Now that is a strong statement. He shows now that Hippocrates's notion is extremely rash: a long deliberation would be needed as to whether it would be wise to become a pupil of Protagoras or, for that matter, of a sophist in general. Now this deliberation does not take place in Socrates's conversation with Hippocrates, and the question arises when or whether it will take place at all. You see here that when he spoke about the difference between body and soul, he spoke first about the case of the body: You would deliberate with your friends and kinsmen. And then in the repetition a few lines later, he says "father and brother," kinsmen, and "we comrades"; he does not use the word "friends" here. Now in the case of the body, the friends are or may be more competent than the father and the brother, obviously. The friends may have medical education and the father and brother may lack it, and this is in no way a disqualification of father and brother.

In the case of the soul, however, father and brother are more competent than the comrades. Are they? One thing is clear. Father and brother generally speaking will be more concerned with the well-being than the comrades. Now this greater concern would be decisive if there were no art called medicine of the soul; then the greater concern would suffice. But if there is an art, medicine of the soul, which the comrades have and father and brother have not, you would of course listen more to the comrades than to father and brother, but that is entirely an open question.

You will see here how Socrates appeals to the prejudice of Hippocrates. "That stranger!" Well, it has of course has a plausible meaning, you know him less than you would know a fellow citizen in a relatively small city. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
When he heard me say this, he replied: No other inference, Socrates, can be drawn from your words.
I proceeded— (313c)

LS: Now what does this mean? You see, literally, "And he having heard, said." Now this, I believe, never occurred before. There were two categorizations of his replies before: in the first place, [in] 310b4, he said "laughed" and in 312a2, "having fallen to blush." First laughing, and then blushing, and now listening. Now it is clear [that] listening is a more serious reaction and a more intellectual reaction than laughing or blushing. The sequence is, as we can say, perfectly logical. First, he is self-assured and he laughs; then he blushes; and now, between the two extremes, he listens.

In this part of the Hippocrates section which we began today, towards the end, there are no longer any oaths. Now generally speaking—I could not prove that; I am speaking from recollection—the oaths increase in such works as Plato's dialogues with the bantering character of the conversation. The more serious, the [fewer the] [2]oaths. I mention this in passing. Now go on, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:
I proceeded: Is not a Sophist, Hippocrates, a person who deals wholesale or retail in such wares as provide food for the soul? I for one think that is the kind of person he is.
And what, Socrates, is the food of the soul?
Surely, I said, knowledge is the food of the soul— (313c)

LS: Literally but not well-translated: "pieces of learning," because it's plural. Pieces of learning. [3]You cannot say knowledges, learnings.

Student: Dogmas?

LS: You can perhaps say doctrines. Doctrines, yes. Dogmas would be misleading . . .

Student: Is this sort of another step of that first progression you mentioned, where first he compares a sophist to someone Hippocrates might want to go to become like, a sculptor or a doctor, and to someone who might educate but whom Hippocrates wouldn't want to become like, analogous to a merchant?

LS: Yes, sure. We come to that. After all, there is a question: How can you call a sophist a retail or wholesale merchant? That we must see. Now let us finish this section.

Mr. Reinken:
and we must take care, my friend, that the Sophist does not deceive us when he praises what he sells, like the dealers, wholesale or retail, who sell the food of the body, for they praise indiscriminately all their goods without knowing what is really beneficial or hurtful to the body. Neither do their customers know, with the exception of a trainer or physician who may happen to buy of them. In like manner those who carry about the wares of knowledge and make the round of the cities and offer or retail them to any customer who wants them, praise them all alike, though you should not be surprised, my dear fellow, if some of them, too, did not know which of their goods have a good and which a bad effect upon the soul; and their customers are equally ignorant, unless he who buys of them happens to be a physician of the soul. (313c-e)

LS: Yes. Socrates states now what a sophist *is*. Hitherto it was said it is dangerous to become a pupil of the sophist, since we do not know what a sophist is. Now it is dangerous to become a pupil of the sophist since we *do* know what a sophist is, at least to some extent. At any rate, Socrates knows. The sophists are sellers of soul food, and therefore are as incompetent judges of its goodness and as dishonest as the sellers of body food. Now why are they called sellers, retail or wholesale? Yes?

Student: Because they charge for the lesson.

LS: That is surely one important point. But also? Well, after all, if a farmer brings grain to the market he will also sell [it], will he not?

Mr. Reinken: They didn't make up all their ideas.

LS: Yes. They did not produce the doctrines which they sell. In Greek, they are not *autourgoi*, not the men who themselves produce the things, but they sell the wares produced by other people. And that is a very severe charge against the sophists, that they are not "quote original unquote." They get their stuff from other people. Yes. Otherwise I believe the comparison, whether it is right or wrong or fair or unfair is another matter, but it is I think perfectly clear. Or do you have difficulties?

Now hitherto Socrates has only stated what sophists have in common with the sellers of body food, and therefore the situation is as grave in both cases. But also we know that most people at all times don't have a sufficient trust in their experience in the kind of honesty of the body food sellers, that they don't take any great chances. Now Socrates says that to buy body food is infinitely less dangerous than to buy soul food. This he will explain in the sequel.[i] There is one point I would like to mention, which I forgot: if he does not happen to be a physician regarding the soul. Here he mentions only the physician, not the trainer, as you see. And generally speaking, gymnastics of the soul is not a very common term. Medicine of the soul has become a very common term throughout the ages. Now why this emphasis on the *restoring* of health rather than the building up of the health of the soul? What does this imply? Yes?

Student: In the *Gorgias* that was the lower theme—

LS: Yes, sure, but still how come—

Same Student: . . .

LS: What does this mean, "medicine of the soul" and there is no gymnastics of the soul, this [is the] implication. Yes?

Student: Maybe it can't be done. Maybe you can't train the soul.

LS: Well, is not it the more obvious explanation that the soul is by nature sick, and therefore what you need is medicine of the soul rather than gymnastics of the soul? This is not entirely far-fetched. In the *Republic*, 341c following, Socrates contrasts the goodness of the art of medicine with the badness of the human body, and he also says that the art of medicine is related to the human body as sight is to the eyes: just as the eyes reach their full actuality by the act of sight, the body reaches its full actuality by means of the art of medicine. One could say art (generalizing from that) is a natural perfection of an imperfect nature. This is a thought which is rich in implications because at the end of this thought, if carried through is [that] nature is bad and everything depends on man's doing, especially art. This only in passing. But it is not an accident, I believe, that medicine of the soul and not gymnastics of the soul has become the term for philosophy from a practical point of view throughout the ages. Yes?

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[i] Here Strauss asks Mr. Reinken to resume reading, then interrupts him.

Mr. Reinken:
If you know which of his wares are good and which are evil, you may safely buy knowledge of Protagoras or of anyone; but if not, then, my friend, watch out, don't take risks, don't gamble, with the most precious thing you have. (313e-314a)

LS: Now Socrates reminds Hippocrates delicately of the fact that Hippocrates is utterly incompetent to judge of the worth of Protagoras's merchandise. This is a sign of Socrates's urbanity, which we see always. There is only one exception—not in Plato, as far as I know, but in Xenophon. Xenophon reports this himself, that Socrates called him in a given situation "You fool!" and "You wretch," which he did not [do] in any other case.[ii] But of course Socrates in Aristophanes's *Clouds* is always very harsh and never urbane. This only in passing. Yes? Now let us continue.

Mr. Reinken:
For there is far greater risk in buying knowledge than in buying meat and drink—

LS: Yes, let us say "doctrines" to keep the plural. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
than in buying food and drink. The one you purchase of the wholesale or retail dealer, and carry them away in other vessels, and before you receive them into the body as food or drink, you may deposit them at home and call in an expert to give you advice—who knows what is good to be eaten and drunk, and what not, and how much, and when; and then the risk of purchasing them is not so great. But you cannot buy doctrines[iii] and carry them away in another vessel; when you have paid for them you must receive them into the soul and go on your way, either greatly harmed or greatly benefited. (314a-b)

LS: Yes. Here we see [that] to buy food for soul is infinitely more dangerous than to buy food for the body. He mentions paying the price only in the case of the soul food, because soul food, in addition to all other difficulties, is also much more expensive than body food, especially if you think of the simplest things like water and bread. You see here also a transition at the beginning of the passage from food to food and drink, so this draws our attention to drink in particular. What could be the connection between Protagoras's merchandise and drink? Yes?

Student: Well, drink can free you from certain inhibitions you might have had.

LS: Water? [Laughter] Certain kinds of drink. What is the immediate effect of this kind of drink you spoke of?

Student: Things other than water can loosen your mind—

LS: Yes, but what is the first effect, I mean the broad effect?

[ii] *Memorabilia* 1.3.8–13.
[iii] In the translation: "knowledge" (and corresponding pronouns).

Student: . . .

LS: No, more immediately, the broad effect. Intoxicating drinks. Now Protagoras intoxicates you, and that we shall see as a gift of charming, of intoxicating people. Yes. And of course the emphasis on drinks is I think also implied in the mere use of "vessels." Many kinds of food you can carry away without having vessels, obviously, but you cannot take away liquids without vessels. And here the vessel is your own soul! And so the effect on your soul is immediate, whereas the effect of the body food depends entirely on when you will eat it and where—you don't have to inflict it on your body immediately. Yes? Good.

Mr. Reinken:
These things let us investigate with our elders, for we are still young—too young to determine such a matter. And now let us go, as we were intending, and hear Protagoras; and when we have heard what he has to say, we may impart it to others. For not only is Protagoras at the house of Callias, but there is Hippias of Elis, and, if I am not mistaken, Prodicus of Ceos and several other wise men. (314b-c)

LS: Now we must deliberate as to whether it is wise or safe to become Protagoras's pupil. It isn't given. This deliberation does not take place now between Hippocrates and Socrates, the implication being that they are incompetent to make this deliberation. And yet, here is something very surprising. What do they do? They have not deliberated, and what do they do?

Student: They go on just the same.

LS: And what does that mean? I mean, following the remark of Socrates. Yes?

Student: He must know himself. Socrates must be—

LS: No, no, I mean they do not deliberate. And Socrates has warned them of the terrific danger. Yes?

Student: Socrates, I suppose, doesn't expect him to plead his case in such a way that Protagoras will immediately accept Hippocrates.

LS: Yes, but that we do not know. I mean, that means another gamble because we cannot know.

Mr. Reinken: They walk right into the lion's mouth?

LS: Absolutely! In other words, despite the danger, Socrates exposes Hippocrates to the soul food or soul drink of Protagoras—obviously, because they cannot know whether Protagoras will say, "Today there will be no food; we will discuss only the salary," or the honorarium or whatever you call it. Socrates, after all, could simply have refused to introduce Hippocrates to Protagoras and simply said: That is too dangerous for you, my

boy, and I will not be responsible for you being corrupted by that stranger-sophist. Why does Socrates not do this? Why does he expose him to Protagoras? Yes?

Mr. Shulsky: Well, this way he can try to do it in such a way that Protagoras won't seem so wise, i.e., if Socrates can beat him in an argument, then Hippocrates won't—

LS: Socrates can debunk him, in other words. That is one way, yes. That is a possible answer, but that means of course that Socrates has very great self-confidence and has taken the measure of Protagoras and can do it. What did you want to say?

Student: I wanted to ask why is it that Socrates says that "we" . . . includes him—

LS: Yes, sure. He is not competent. They must both deliberate with people wiser than they.

Student: The question is, are those other people really wiser than Socrates?

LS: Well, this is always a question, but we have to take this nevertheless literally: they will have to deliberate with other people. Now here, with whom can they possibly deliberate? Because immediately after he said this he says: Then after having heard, we will also communicate with others, for not only Protagoras is there but also Hippias and Prodicus. Does this not suggest that they will deliberate with [LS chuckles] two other sophists there? Because there is *some* deliberation with them which takes place, yes, but that we of course do not know. The deliberation about the wisdom of becoming Protagoras's pupil will take place perhaps within the dialogue itself. Or the debunking of course would also [4][be a part of] the deliberation.

When he speaks here of these two other sophists, he mentions Hippias first, and then in the case of Prodicus he adds: I believe also Prodicus. In other words, this is weakened; he is not so sure in the case of Prodicus. Prodicus happened to be the sophist closest to Socrates—that we know, for example, from Aristophanes's *Clouds*,[iv] and that is very interesting. We have a Platonic dialogue called *Protagoras*, as we see; there are two dialogues called *Hippias*, and there is no dialogue called *Prodicus*. That is curious. We will take this up later after we have made the acquaintance of these gentlemen.

Now here we are at the end of the Hippocrates section. We have learned here that the whole discussion with Protagoras takes place for the sake of Hippocrates, we can say in order to prevent the corruption of Hippocrates by Protagoras. There is a whole discussion with Gorgias which takes place for the sake of Gorgias and not directly to prevent his corruption; he is too old for that, but still, in another way to improve him. The theme of the *Protagoras* seems to be higher than that of the *Gorgias*, if sophistry is indeed higher than rhetoric, but the level of treatment is lower in the *Protagoras* than in the *Gorgias*. Now the character for the sake of whom the conversation with Protagoras takes place, [Hippocrates], is of course different from the characters to whom the conversation is narrated, the comrade at the beginning. The comrade—you had difficulties

[iv] *Clouds* 359–62.

understanding?[v] What I said was extremely simple, [but] I may have expressed it clumsily. There is a character or characters to whom the conversation with Protagoras is narrated, the comrade at the beginning. And then there is a character for the sake of whom the conversation with Protagoras takes place.

Let us look at this character now for the sake of whom the conversation takes place. He is quite young. He is manly, vehement, swears frequently. He is more tinged by "quote intellectualism unquote" than the comrade. He knows much earlier of the arrival of such a star as Protagoras. And he is very egotistical: we have seen how he behaved toward Socrates in the bedroom. While eager for things new and strange, he is however under the spell of the old prejudices—never would he become a sophist, for example. Socrates does not try to cure him, as he tried to cure the comrade by an appeal to Homer or other traditional authorities. Now this brief conversation with Hippocrates is, as I stated before, the central conversation within the dialogue. It is the only conversation which takes place in strict privacy. One man talking to one man: in Greek, *monos pros monon*. It is the only dialogue which exists which takes place in the privacy of Socrates's house, not to say of his bedroom. Some of you will remember another bedroom scene of which we learn in the Platonic dialogues.

Student: The *Crito*?

LS: That is also in a way true, yes, in a way. But that is a special bedroom, in jail. That is quite true, but there is a more famous one: Alcibiades's report of his sleeping with Socrates at the end of the *Banquet*.[vi] But you are quite right, the *Crito* is very important. But as was pointed out to me after the last meeting by some of you, the situation is very different in the *Crito*. Crito enters Socrates's bedroom in the very early morning without awakening him—you know, Socrates should sleep in the short time that he has to live; he should not be exposed to the agony of death—whereas Hippocrates awakens him because he comes with good news. We can leave it at that.

This much I wanted to say about this central conversation (although in external terms it is rather "ex-centric," rather close to the beginning). Is there any point which you would like to raise in connection with what we have discussed now? Now we turn to the bulk of the dialogue. Yes?

Student: How would anybody be able to find out what the doctrines of a sophist were without exposing himself to the danger of learning them from the sophist?

LS: That is a good question! But still, you can perhaps go by very crude criteria. For example, if you know that it is improper to study things in heaven or beneath the earth, and then you find out that this sophist does study things in heaven or beneath the earth, it is clear. Isn't that simple? Or if he would say there is nothing just by nature; all justice is convention. Could you not on this basis say: I don't want anything to do with him? And at least: I don't want my immature children to have anything to do with him. How do

[v] Strauss addresses this question to one of the students.
[vi] 217c7–e6.

people go about in choosing teachers for their children? I mean, there are some cases which have come to the public record—the professor (where was it, in Indiana or in Illinois?) who gave uncalled for advice to co-eds. You have heard of it? I suppose quite a few parents would say on the basis of this mere fact that he is not a good teacher of girls. I mean, I don't see a great difference. You asked a broad question in the most general terms, [so] I give you a very general answer. Or would you wish to make your question more specific?

Same Student: Socrates initially expresses the danger of going to a sophist in terms of not knowing anything of the doctrines of the sophist. This is not the same thing as knowing perhaps one doctrine of a professor, which may or may not disqualify him.

LS: Yes, all right. But how would you behave as a father in such a case where you do not know if the merchandise is healthy or unhealthy for your child? What would you do?

Same Student: Well, I'd be inclined to go see myself.

LS: Aha. In other words, you would not do what Socrates does, namely, to expose his soul to that possibly unhealthy, maybe fatal merchandise.

Same Student: Well, personally I am skeptical that doctrines can in and of themselves do damage if there is someone available to refute them. I don't see that there is anything unreasonable about Socrates's conduct. But what I see as somewhat unreasonable is Socrates's insistence on the dangers to Hippocrates of their going off to see Protagoras in the first place.

LS: Yes. Well, you see, your view is familiar to me, that no doctrine can be dangerous because (how was it called?) the free market, also market of ideas, and the good cause will be victorious. But can it not do some harm while it is not yet deflated? And secondly, how important is the refutation regarding its effect? There are many refuted doctrines which are still very active. I mean, quite a few people have refuted Marxism both in its original and more recent forms, but you must admit this is much less efficient than the armament of this country. In other words, are men as rational as you presuppose? That's a simple question—that a doctrine by virtue of having been refuted ceases to be powerful.

Same Student: Well, I think it's a question of who delivers the refutation and when. If Hippocrates went off to Protagoras and heard a dangerous doctrine and wrongly believed it, and then some six months later chanced to hear a refutation from somebody he didn't particularly trust anyway, then this refutation would have no effect. In this particular case, if Socrates is going along with him, he obviously has a considerable trust in Socrates, and Socrates would be able to refute it immediately if a refutation were called for.

LS: Yes. That is in a way what happens. But the other question, however, is this: You say he has considerable trust in Socrates, but he does not for one moment think that Socrates could supply him with good soul food. So how great can that trust in Socrates be? He has

asked Socrates as a man benevolent to him and as one whose advice he would listen to within limits, but not as a wise man. I mean, if Socrates were sensitive to the least degree, he could very well feel offended: he knows him for a long time and does not for one moment consider him a wise man, whereas he regards Protagoras, that star, of course as a wise man on the basis of his starlike appearance.

But I think the question of principle which you raise, there is no doctrine however wrong which can do harm to the soul, is exactly the problem here. That is what divides most of us from Plato and other men, that they thought that there are dangerous doctrines; and the now-prevailing view is that there are no dangerous doctrines, to state it simply and honestly. That is a great question we must face, but that is exactly the reason why we read such books: in order to look at our fundamental premises from the other side. We may arrive at the conclusion, which is perfectly open, that the now-prevailing view is correct, but then we will understand our view much better after having gone through that operation than if we simply continue what we have thought before without testing. Does this not suffice? It's very good you brought this up. Mr. Shulsky?

Mr. Shulsky: Can you use the analogy of drink here and say that perhaps what Protagoras is going to teach won't simply be a matter of doctrines, or won't be simply a question of doctrines which have a value or truth but which will become something in the way of an appetite for one reason or another, and won't simply be questioned—

LS: Yes. Sure. Well, let us make a distinction between unimportant doctrines and important doctrines. An unimportant doctrine about the intestines of the worm, this cannot possibly corrupt anyone. But doctrines about good and bad, justice and injustice do not have this character. And obviously Protagoras is so much in demand because he teaches *interesting* things, important things, not unimportant doctrines. Mr. Bruell?

Mr. Bruell: Does the fact that Socrates is willing to lead Hippocrates into this danger raise a question about what we discussed earlier concerning whether this is a voluntary or involuntary discussion? Because if Protagoras was at all difficult of access, then Socrates would come having a bait, in a way, having a possible student.

LS: But we do not know enough of that. This would presuppose that Socrates had never seen Protagoras before, and I don't disclose a secret to you when I tell you [that] he had seen Protagoras before. So this coming to Protagoras in the company of Hippocrates radically differs from other conversations Socrates had with Protagoras where no such bait was brought with him.

Student: One reason you gave the gentleman over there for reading Plato, Plato's writing—

LS: Or such books in general.

Student: . . . reading them . . . to get another view was to better understand our opinions, views, much better. Why do we have to read other people's books to understand our opinions better?

LS: Because do you know of anyone today who states the other view, the alternatives to the view now prevailing, as forcefully as the great men of the past did?

Same Student: Do we have to understand another argument to know our argument as well?

LS: [5]There are some people who are doubtful of the soundness of, say, the Dewists, John Dewey.[vii] But whether these men have the power of presenting that alternative view and insight into all of the important ramifications which men of the magnitude of Plato have, that is a question that I believe is not a serious question—because I would say I have some experience, but I think there is no one there who can be compared.

Student: But those of them who understand themselves—say, John Locke for instance, he needn't have read anything by Plato or Aristotle. It's only those who are somewhat inferior to them—

LS: That is not quite true. How does John Locke call his peculiar approach to the fundamental questions? Well, he doesn't say it in one of the better-known works. I happen to know it: "the way of ideas."[viii] And he traces that to Descartes. But who began to speak in a very audible way of ideas?

Student: Plato.

LS: So I believe one has to know Plato if one wants to understand what the Cartesian-Lockean "way of ideas" is. And one could say that in other cases. Certainly in Locke himself, you cannot understand him sufficiently if you do not know, say, surely Filmer, and also Hooker, Richard Hooker. So that is a very simple question in principle. One has to know the so-called quarrel of the ancients and moderns because we are driven back to it again and again. Therefore, it is not a serious difficulty. You wanted to say?

Student: You mentioned a moment ago in answering one of these other questions concerning what a father does when he is introducing his son to a new danger—I wonder if there is a possibility here that Socrates regards himself in the realm of ideas as the father of Hippocrates in a certain sense.

LS: In a way.

[vii] John Dewey (1858–1952), American philosopher and liberal humanist. Founder of the University of Chicago Laboratory School. His writings include *Democracy and Education* (1916), *The Public and Its Problems* (1927), and *Experience and Education* (1938)

[viii] See John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.

Student: In that sense that when a father is going to introduce his son to a dangerous thing, he may do it in a way that it is consonant with the nature of the son. For example, Hippocrates is an impulsive and courageous, manly, masculine individual. So Socrates could consider that if he simply said: No, these are dangerous doctrines, that Hippocrates might be perverse enough to go anyway.

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LS: No, he couldn't; he wouldn't—no, that's clear. The only link with Protagoras is Socrates, that's the implication. This won't do. But your question reminds me of a classic discussion, much earlier than Dewey, and that is Milton's *Areopagitica*. And he takes issue with the caution, with the cautious posture of the ancient writers. He says fundamentally that we must be exposed to all kinds of evil to be truly good. And he speaks of cloistered virtue as something which is not good. Real virtue is something which is exposed. If you read the *Areopagitica*—I'm sure some of you will have read it because it is one of the very early and famous documents for complete freedom of discussion. If you think through this argument, it would simply mean that the best [6][way] to bring up children is in a street in which the majority of houses are houses of ill repute. [Laughter] Now Milton of course did not mean that, and I believe no sane man ever meant it. But nevertheless, you see there are some limits. I mean, there is at least a certain stage in the development in which our education must be cloistered, and the question is how long this takes. Whether eight years is the end, or fourteen years, or maybe even, as the ancients said, in the case of many men, their whole life, that is a great question.

Student: As far as Socrates deciding to go talk to Protagoras with Hippocrates as bait, as you said, is there a possibility at least that Socrates here is saying to himself, well, that he's fairly sure that what will come out of the discussion will convince Hippocrates that Protagoras has nothing to offer? "But, in any case, what is important to me as a thinking man is not so much the opportunity to do something morally good for another person as the opportunity to have, since I am a young man still learning, an intellectual or intelligent discussion with another person."

LS: Yes, well this is only a repetition of an argument which says that Socrates could have gone to Protagoras any time without Hippocrates.

Same Student: Yes, but perhaps because Hippocrates is there, Protagoras is now more willing to spend time with this young Socrates.

LS: But is Socrates so busy that he could not go there except if he has such a practical reason? We know Socrates is not busy at all. He does nothing but talk the whole day.

Same Student: The point is not whether Socrates is busy, but is Hippocrates being used merely as bait to get Socrates into a good discussion with Protagoras, or—

LS: Yes. That is a question which we cannot now answer, because we must see how things develop. We do not know. Mr. Glenn, this will be the last question now. Yes?

Mr. Glenn: What is the justification, if there is this tension that exists between the pursuit of understanding on the one hand, and the possibility, I mean necessity for studying evil doctrines on the other hand, what is the justification for the pursuit of wisdom? Perhaps we should just take our chances with beneficial falsehoods.

LS: No, that is not the point. The question is whether someone like the slave-hunting Hippocrates, a young boy of, say, sixteen, seventeen, has the nature and the preparation for the pursuit of wisdom. Now let us go on where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
To this we agreed and proceeded on our way until we reached the vestibule of the house, and there we stopped in order to conclude, before entering the house, a discussion which had arisen between us as we were going along, and we stood talking in the vestibule until we had finished and come to an understanding. (314c)

LS: Yes. Now let us stop here. So there is here a conversation between Socrates and Hippocrates which is not reported, as you see. And we draw from this the simple and trivial conclusion that not every *logos*, not every conversation is disclosed. Socrates says they complete that *logos* while standing. Standing is emphasized; they do no longer walk. There is a difference between what you do standing and what you do walking. I think you know this from your own experience; you are more concentrated when you stand than when you are walking. You talk to someone and then in the moment you don't go on because you need a greater concentration, and the greater movement of the body which is implied in walking would be detrimental to the movement of the mind. Coming to a stand after movement is acquiring the concept of the thing in question. Read Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, in the end.[ix]

This conversation comes to an end, and the conversation with Protagoras which follows is in a way incomplete. There is also a classic passage about standing in a vestibule in the beginning of Plato's *Banquet*,[x] and Alcibiades also refers to Socrates standing in silent meditation in the *Banquet* 220c. But in the *Banquet*, Socrates stands in the vestibule of the neighboring house, not in the house. Why? Because the house of Agathon, to which they go for the banquet, is open and it would be very embarrassing to be seen from the house standing. Whereas here, as we shall see, the house to which they go now is very much closed. This similarity between *Protagoras* and the *Banquet* is important, as we shall see later. The personnel of the *Protagoras* is to a large extent identical with the personnel of the *Banquet*. What that means is another matter. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:
And I think that the doorkeeper, who was a eunuch and who was probably annoyed at the great inroad of the Sophists, must have heard us talking. At any rate, when we knocked at the door and he opened and saw us, he grumbled: They are Sophists—he is not at home;

[ix] Consider *Posterior Analytics* 100a15 and following.
[x] 174d5–175c2.

and instantly gave the door a hearty bang with both his hands. Again we knocked, and he answered— (314c-d)[xi]

LS: —"human beings," which as we know in Greek has a derogatory meaning. Not *andres*, not . . . You would say this to men you despise, to slaves and other people. Yes. Good.

Mr. Reinken:
without opening: Did you not hear me say that he is not at home, fellows? But, my friend, I said, you need not be alarmed, for we are not Sophists, and we did not come to see Callias, but we do want to see Protagoras, and I must request you to announce us. At last, after a good deal of difficulty, the man was persuaded to open the door. (314d-e)

LS: Yes. You see, the subject of the non-reported conversation between Socrates and Hippocrates was such perhaps that the eunuch who heard it regarded Socrates and Hippocrates as sophists. But of course that does not mean very much, because this man was surely very incompetent to judge; anything which went beyond his narrow horizon was probably sophistry.

Now the eunuch, the lowest of the low, considers himself superior to the sophists, obviously. The sophists are even less masculine than eunuchs for reasons which we have discussed on a former occasion, because sophists are men who talk and talk and talk and sit at home like women. In the eunuch's perspective, even the manly Hippocrates, to say nothing of Socrates, can appear to be a sophist. The eunuch is angry, as you see, and also eunuchs are supposed to be particularly tame, like castrated horses and bulls. (See Xenophon's *Education of Cyrus*, book 7, chapter 5, paragraphs 59 to 65.) But of course this poor man suffers from unusual provocation. The big crowds of sophists and their followers cause him a lot of trouble: he has constantly to open the door for them.

Now Socrates and Hippocrates, as we have seen, do not use a stick for knocking at the door as Hippocrates had done when knocking at Socrates's house. The door is shut twice before their noses. The doorman is a kind of Cerberus, the hellhound. This enemy of the sophists makes access to the sophists very difficult, whereas access to Socrates even before daybreak is very easy, as we have seen. The sophists are very much indoor men. Socrates was always, as Xenophon puts it, in the open, in the marketplace. So one wonders whether he was also in the marketplace during night time or before daybreak, which of course cannot be the meaning. Of course, Socrates also does not demand money for his teaching. It is easier to have access to a man who does not demand money for being seen than to a man who demands money for being seen, as I do not have to point out. In the *Clouds*, the oldest presentation of Socrates, Socrates is difficult of access. There a pupil, an adherent of Socrates, watches the entrance. In the *Protagoras*, a eunuch, an enemy of the sophist, watches the entrance. So it's much more difficult to get in to Protagoras than to the sophist Socrates as he is presented in Aristophanes's *Clouds*. The Socrates of the *Clouds*, we can also say, is difficult of access because he *wishes* to be difficult of access, in contradistinction to Protagoras, who is difficult of access not

[xi] The tape was changed at this point.

because he wishes to be difficult of access but because he has such an unsympathetic doorman.

In the *Protagoras*, the emasculated doorman tries to prevent Socrates and Hippocrates from seeing Protagoras. In the *Gorgias*, the very virile Callicles eagerly welcomes Socrates and Chaerephon to see Gorgias. The *Gorgias*, to repeat, is a voluntary dialogue; easy access to the hero. The *Protagoras* is a compulsory dialogue, and the hero is difficult of access. Now this difficulty of access to the sophist is imitated by the plan of the *Protagoras*. We don't enter immediately, but we go first through the conversation with the comrade, then through the conversation with Hippocrates, and then only do we come to Protagoras himself. So let us read now the sequel. So eventually the doorman has no choice but to open, and he opens. Did you want to say something?

Student: This is a tribute to Socrates's use of rhetoric too, isn't it, that he's able to persuade the doorman, the unthinking doorman, to open the door?

LS: Yes. Socrates must have had some authority in his voice if needed, as opposed to rhetoric as meant here. It is of course clear that this description could never have been given in a performed dialogue. Only by narrating could he bring out this amusing scene, and also the immediate sequel which is in a way still more amusing. Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:
When we entered, we found Protagoras taking a walk in the cloister; and attending him, in proper order on one side were walking Callias, the son of Hipponicus, and Paralus, the son of Pericles, who, by the mother's side, is his half-brother, and Charmides, the son of Glaucon. On the other side of him were Xanthippus, the other son of Pericles, Philippides, the son of Philomelus; also Antimoerus of Mende, who of all the disciples of Protagoras is the most famous and intends to make sophistry his profession. A train of listeners followed him. The greater part of them appeared to be foreigners, whom Protagoras always brings with him out of the various cities visited by him in his journeys—he, like Orpheus, charming them with his voice, and they following its spell. (314e-315b)

LS: Yes, "following his voice, charmed." [7]He repeats the same expression. Yes? That is what I said before about the intoxication: intoxication is a kind of a charm. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
I should mention also that there were some Athenians in the chorus. Nothing delighted me more than the spectacle of this chorus, and the punctilious care they took never to get into Protagoras' way. But whenever he and those who were with him turned back, then the band of listeners parted regularly on either side, wheeled around, and took their places behind him in perfect order. (315b)

LS: Yes. The most visible of all is our hero Protagoras, and he walks around. The word is the same in Greek as the later Peripatetic:[xii] "moving around." And he is quite audible in what he says. He is accompanied by six men mentioned by name; they belong mostly to the cream of Athenian patriciate. You see Pericles, and Callias is from an old family, and of course Charmides is the uncle of Plato, and so on. Yes. Protagoras is compared to Orpheus—you know Orpheus, who could charm not only men but beasts as well—and he is Orpheus-like, accompanied by a chorus. Orpheus came from Thrace and Protagoras also came from Thrace. His chorus is, however, different from a theatrical chorus; it listens only. The only man with a voice in that chorus is the chorus leader. Now the chorus is of course an apt emblem: *chorus* means music, and music is a fundamental part of education. Protagoras is a great educator, and this seems very beautiful to him. Now let us come to the next.

Mr. Reinken:
After him, as Homer says, "I lifted up my eyes and saw" Hippias the Elean sitting in the opposite cloister on a chair of state, and around him were seated on benches Eryximachus, the son of Acumenus, and Phaedrus the Myrrhinusian, and Andron, the son of Androtion, and there were strangers both from his native Elis, and some others: they were putting to Hippias certain physical and astronomical questions, and he, *ex cathedra*, was passing judgment upon their several questions and discussing them. (315c)

LS: Now Hippias is presented as *sitting*, as you see, and three men are mentioned by name. He sits in the center of a circle, not at the head of an army like Protagoras. And here a subject is mentioned: physical things and astronomical things. Astronomical things are of special interest because in Aristophanes's *Clouds*, the oldest presentation of Socrates, the old peasant who wants to become Socrates's pupil, Strepsiades, has some interest in all subjects which Socrates teaches *except* astronomy: it's too far away, too high. Now here in the case of Hippias, comrades—the *synontes* who band together with him—ask questions and do not merely listen, as you see. Two of them, Eryximachus and Phaedrus, occur in important positions in the *Banquet*, making speeches there.

At the beginning of this passage, he quotes Homer: *this one I also saw*. But of course not Homer says it, if you would look it up, but Odysseus.[xiii] And we draw this provisional conclusion: that Socrates is appearing here in this dialogue in the role of Odysseus. Hippias—I mean, the words quoted refer there of course not to Hippias but to Heracles, but only to the phantom of Heracles. So the true Heracles of physics and astronomy, we can conclude, is not Hippias. Hippias was known rather as a foolish man. Let us turn now to the third group.

Mr. Reinken:

[xii] Peripatetics, an ancient school of philosophy based on the teachings of Aristotle; so named because of the covered walkway or colonnade (*peripatos*) at Aristotle's Lyceum, where the students walked, or because of that very habit of walking (*peripateō*) and talking.
[xiii] *Odyssey* 11.601.

Also, "mine eyes beheld Tantalus,"[xiv] for Prodicus the Cean was at Athens, too: he had been lodged in a room which, in the days of Hipponicus— (314c-d)

LS: This is the father of Callias, a very rich man, and Callias ruins the fortune.[xv] Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
was a storehouse; but, as the house was full, Callias had cleared this out and made the room into a guest room. Now Prodicus was still in bed, wrapped up in sheepskins and bedclothes, of which there seemed to be a great heap; and there were sitting near by him on the couches Pausanias of the deme of Cerameis; and with Pausanias was a youth quite young, who is certainly remarkable for his good looks and, if I am not mistaken, is also of a fair and gentle nature. I thought that I heard him called Agathon, and my suspicion is that he is the beloved of Pausanias. There was this youth, and also there were the two Adeimantuses, one the son of Cepis, and the other of Leucolophides, and some others. I was very anxious to hear what Prodicus was saying, for he seems to me to be an all-wise and inspired man; but I was not able to get into the inner circle, and his deep voice made an echo in the room which rendered his words inaudible. (315d-316a)

LS: Yes. Now Prodicus is compared to Tantalus. Tantalus suffers from pain. And he, Prodicus, is lying in an empty storehouse. [8]Just as Tantalus will not get any food, Prodicus will not get any food. Prodicus is the least conspicuous of the three sophists, as is here also indicated by the fact that he says, "Oh, yes, Prodicus also was there," as if he had not thought of it. He is the closest of the three to Socrates, but there is no dialogue *Prodicus*, as I mentioned before. Prodicus lies in bed. He is a very soft man. This also is confirmed by a remark about him in Aristophanes's *Clouds*.[xvi] Here there are four men mentioned by name. Two of them again [are] speakers in the *Banquet*, Pausanias and Agathon. The subject of their conversation is inaudible because of the acoustics. Socrates says only in the case of Prodicus that he was eager to hear what he says, but he couldn't hear. Prodicus is apparently the least accessible of the three sophists. Yes? You come in and you see immediately Protagoras, and then you see also very soon Hippias; but since Prodicus is lying in a special room, he is the least accessible.

Now it is very strange; here is again the same passage in the *Odyssey*: Socrates sees Tantalus, and that is Prodicus; and he sees the shadow of Heracles, that is Hippias; and one is eager to know who is the Homeric equivalent of Protagoras. Now I will anticipate later developments [in] 393e following: Protagoras is Achilles, in a way the greatest of all heroes. But in that Hades scene described in the eleventh book of the *Odyssey* from which this passage comes, Achilles is no longer that great hero but has become converted from all belief in courage and prefers the life of a poor laborer who is alive to the misery of the dead, however great heroes they may have been.

Only among Prodicus's companions do we find a couple of lovers. When he mentions Pausanias and Agathon, these names become meaningful from the *Banquet*. The other

[xiv] *Odyssey* 11.582.
[xv] Andocides, *On the Mysteries*, 1.124–27.
[xvi] *Clouds* 360–61.

two men have the same names: Adeimantus, they're both called. Now it was Prodicus's specialty to make a distinction between different words which seemed to mean the same thing but meaning in fact different things. We will find some examples of it later. Here there is the same name, Adeimantus, but they are different. Protagoras has the same number of companions mentioned by name as Socrates in the *Gorgias*. Whether that is meaningful is another matter. Now we come to a brief scene of some importance. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
No sooner had we entered than there followed us Alcibiades the beautiful, as you say, and I believe you, and also Critias the son of Callaeschrus. (316a)

LS: Yes. Now Socrates and Hippocrates come late, but not too late as Socrates and Chaerephon came in the *Gorgias*. After them come only Alcibiades and Critias. The question is: Do they belong to Socrates, as the other men named belong to one or the other of these wise men? Socrates was accused according to Xenophon of having corrupted Critias and Alcibiades and thus harmed the city: under the democracy, Alcibiades; and under the oligarchy, Critias. If they belong to Socrates, Socrates has three companions just as Hippias [has].

Socrates tells the *Protagoras* to the comrade while sitting. We have seen that in 310a. And as we will see, the conversation with Protagoras takes place also while they are sitting. Now sitting has something to do with idleness. The only observation I have is in a very late author but [a man] well read in many of the classics, Pico della Mirandola, famous for his statement of the dignity of man, which is quite well-known: "The wise Protagoras will warn us not to sit too much, that is not to loosen the reins of the rational part whereby the soul measures, judges, and examines everything and not to lose it in slothful idleness."[xvii] I tell you this for whatever it may be worth.

The conversation between Socrates and Hippocrates takes place while they are walking around in the vestibule of Socrates, like Protagoras and his school. There is no parallel with Prodicus unless you will say the very beginning of the Hippocrates section where Socrates also is lying in bed as Prodicus is lying in bed here. But much more important: the *Protagoras* we see here presents Socrates's–Odysseus's descent to Hades. I have given you some indication of that from the very beginning. The very first words: "From where do you come to sight?" I mean this gesture: "I am." From where do you come to sight, but it is easily completed . . . and the Cerberus who watches the door. Now Plato makes this pun more than once [LS writes on the blackboard], *Haidēs* and *aides* (the invisible), in the *Phaedo* and in the *Gorgias* also.[xviii] The invisibility of the ideas but also the invisibility of wisdom. In the dialogue *Sophist*, Hades is called a sophist.[xix]

But there is also an amusing story. This takes place in the house of Callias, and here I must give you a piece of Athenian gossip. Callias was married, and he had a strange mother-in-law who started to have illicit relations with [9][him]. And so Callias lived

[xvii] *Oratio de hominis dignitatis*, 1486.
[xviii] *Gorgias* 493b; *Phaedo* 80d5–e1, 81a4–10 (see also *Cratylus* 403a).
[xix] Hades is called a sophist in *Cratylus* 403d–e.

together with the daughter and the mother, like Pluto, Hades, the god of the netherworld, with his wife Demeter and daughter Persephone; and therefore he was called Hades in Athenian gossip. And this is, by the way, the background of Xenophon's writing called *Oeconomicus*, because there we know this much: the father-in-law of Callias was called Ischomachus, and in the *Oeconomicus* the hero is called Ischomachus, however without his father's name; and Ischomachus was a very common name, so one cannot know, but he could very well be—there are some reasons for assuming—the father-in-law of Callias. Now this Ischomachus tells Socrates a very long story of what a wonderful educator of his young wife he was. He was at the time perhaps one or two years married, and she was completely innocent when she married him, and he educated her so that she was a model of a wife and, well, we don't know how this wife looked ten years later. Our imagination is fertilized by this reading of the speech by Andocides on the mysteries, in which this story of Callias's household is told.[xx] Good. This jocular point is by no means unworthy of Plato but [one] which we must mention.

We are in Hades. We have confirmed that. And Hades is of course a place of terror, from which one would run away. Now in a way this is exactly what happens at the end of the *Protagoras*, where Socrates in a way runs away. And in this situation of having run away from Hades, he meets the comrades, and in a relieved way, to be out of that terrible place, he tells them of his adventures in Hades. It does make sense. Socrates belongs to the world of the living, to the city, but he has once been in Hades; he has once been with the sophists.

Now there are all together nineteen individuals mentioned by name here in this section and in the whole dialogue *Protagoras*. In the center, from two different points of view, however you count, you find either Phaedrus, the hero of the dialogue *Phaedrus* and also in a way of the *Banquet*, and according to another counting, Eryximachus, the physician who in the *Banquet* exchanges his place with Aristophanes.

Now the account of the sophists here is obviously comic. I think that there is universal agreement on that. And this of course could only have been done in a narrated dialogue. The *Protagoras*, the dialogue on Socrates's meeting with the sophists, had to be narrated, since Socrates could not speak of their ridiculous character to the sophists themselves. Is this not clear? He could not have brought out their ridiculous character in this way in conversation with them, but only in conversation about them. But why is it a narrated dialogue preceded by a performed dialogue? In other words, to what kind of people does Socrates narrate the conversation? A simple answer: to quite ordinary people. There is nothing extraordinary, nothing secret about what went on at that meeting. Nevertheless, that meeting with Protagoras still needs a decent justification, and that decent justification is given by the central section: the conversation with Hippocrates. Socrates goes there for the sake of Hippocrates.

There is another point to consider, however. If sophistry is ridiculous, it cannot be truly harmful. See Aristotle's *Poetics*, chapter 5, and Plato's *Philebus* 49.[xxi] But one thing:

[xx] Andocides, *On the Mysteries* 124–27.
[xxi] *Philebus* 49b–c, e.

Why is it presented as ridiculous, i.e., as not harmful? The simplest explanation (and here I come back to something that you meant):[xxii] it could be understood as a plea for the toleration of sophists by the city. Such toleration might be necessary if philosophy is to be tolerated, for the city is perhaps not able to distinguish properly between sophistry and philosophy. This degree of liberalism I regard as perfectly compatible with Socrates and Plato. I do not know whether it meets your bill, but it is of some importance, I believe. So now let us read the next speech.

Mr. Reinken:
On entering we stopped a little, in order to look about us, and then walked up to Protagoras, and I said: Protagoras— (316a)

LS: Now wait a moment. Who are the "we"? That's the question. You see if you look three lines below this: "When we entered," three lines before, at the beginning of the preceding speech.

Mr. Reinken: The beginning of the preceding *speech*?

LS: "No sooner had we entered." No, it's before "no sooner had we entered." Who are the "we" there?

Mr. Reinken: Hippocrates and Socrates.

LS: And who are the "we" in the next speech?

Mr. Reinken: Presumably those two, plus Alcibiades and Critias—

LS: Possibly at least, possibly at least. Yes, good. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:
On entering we stopped a little, in order to look about us, and then walked up to Protagoras, and I said: Protagoras, my friend Hippocrates here and I— (316a-b)

LS: Of course there is no "friend"; I mean, that is sentimental. There's no "friend." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Hippocrates here and I have come to see you.
Do you wish, he said, to speak with me alone, or in the presence of the company?

LS: Let us stop here. Now as I have said before, the "we" now who enter might be Socrates, Alcibiades, Critias, and Hippocrates, and that would mean that Alcibiades and Critias belong to Socrates's group, just as Hippias has his group: Prodicus and Protagoras.

[xxii] Strauss apparently addresses a student, as is suggested by his comment a few lines later, "I don't know whether it meets your bill."

Now Socrates knows Protagoras, that is perfectly clear, and Protagoras knows him. Hippocrates does not know Protagoras. That's different in the *Gorgias,* where Socrates's companion Chaerephon knows Gorgias better than Socrates does. You see, Socrates knows Protagoras from earlier meetings. There is a relative frequency of Socrates's meetings with Protagoras—maybe two, maybe three times, maybe more—contrasted with the infrequency of his coming to Callias's house. The eunuch didn't know him, the doorman. The meeting or meetings which Socrates had with Protagoras not for the sake of Hippocrates are not reported by either Plato or Socrates; that we must figure out for ourselves. We know only of this particular meeting. So Protagoras in his reply suggests that Socrates and Hippocrates might have something private to talk about, something personal, something to hide before the public. Now what does Socrates say to that?

Mr. Reinken:
Whichever you please, I said; you shall determine when you have heard the purpose of our visit. (316b)

LS: Yes. Socrates says: No, but perhaps you, Protagoras, might like to have a private meeting. In other words, Protagoras presents Socrates and Hippocrates with the choice, and Socrates turns the tables: No, you choose. We will see that this is of some importance. And now Socrates states the subject of the visit.

Mr. Reinken:
[*Protag.*:] And what is your purpose? he said.
[*Soc.*:] I must explain, I said, that Hippocrates is a native Athenian. He is the son of Apollodorus, and of a great and prosperous house, and he is himself in natural ability regarded as quite a match for anybody of his own age. I believe that he aspires to political eminence, and he thinks that association with you is most likely to procure this for him. And now you can determine whether you would wish to speak to him of your teaching alone or in the presence of the company. (316b-c)

LS: You see here Socrates says nothing about Hippocrates's nature. He says he is supposed to be gifted; he doesn't say he is. Or "regarded," as it is translated. He says something about his family background, his social position. The son of a wealthy house, etc. And then he also says something about his motive, but qualified: he seems—well, in Greek it is so—he seems according to his nature to be competitive with his contemporaries. "He seems to me" —that's Socrates's view, not the general view—"to desire to become famous in the city." That is to be taken more seriously, as you see.

Now from this, if we disregard the last sentence, it would follow that there is no need for private talks. This is an average boy, there is nothing very interesting about that. But nevertheless, Socrates repeats here again: You, Protagoras, must make your choice between private and public discussion. And then in that long speech of Protagoras which follows, which we cannot read today, Protagoras makes his choice. Well, one can almost repeat this common saying: You pays your money, and I makes the choice. So Protagoras makes his choice in favor of public discussion, and the reason given in a very long and beautiful, not to say pompous, speech is, I have nothing to hide. I have nothing to hide,

but the other sophists, they hide their teaching. I do not, and it is very foolish to hide anything, because that only makes people more suspicious. [10]So it will be public. But Socrates has a feeling—Socrates is very clever, as you see—that the reason why Protagoras wanted to have a public discussion was not that he had nothing to hide but that he wanted to show off before his competitors, the other sophists.

Now here this statement is quite remarkable. Protagoras is the first sophist who reveals the fact that he is a sophist. He is the first sophist who speaks up. "The first who speaks up" is almost a literal translation of his name: *protos,* first; *agoreuein,* speaking. The first man who speaks up. Then why did the former sophists conceal their being sophists? That we must discuss next time. So we will continue at this place; and then there are some other long speeches of Protagoras in which he explains the meaning of his art, and after that the discussion begins. But the discussion is wholly unintelligible if we do not hear first from Protagoras's own mouth what his claim is, and we turn to that next time.

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[1] Deleted "Now let us go on."
[2] Deleted "less"
[3] Deleted "I mean."

[4] Deleted "form"
[5] Deleted "Well, the question is—I mean"
[6] Deleted "thing"
[7] Deleted "I mean the emphasis"
[8] Deleted "you know"
[9] Deleted "her son-in-law, Callias"
[10] Deleted "and."

Session 6: April 14, 1965

Is Virtue Teachable? (316c-320c)

Leo Strauss: So now we will continue our study of the *Protagoras*. Which point did we reach?

Mr. Reinken: Protagoras was about to launch into his first big speech.

LS: That is 316c3, is that it?

Student: Yes.

LS: You remember the situation, I trust. Socrates had given a description of the three groups of sophists—Protagoras, Hippias, and Prodicus; and then, followed by Critias and Alcibiades, he entered the room and they approach Protagoras. Socrates confronts Protagoras with a choice: Should it be a private or a public conversation? But Protagoras should not make up his mind before he knows the reason that they came; and Socrates explains that they come for the sake of Hippocrates, and the only fact he tells him is that Hippocrates comes from a very prosperous house. The other thing is the reputation of Hippocrates, [who is] thought to be gifted. But Socrates has the impression that he is ambitious, eager for fame in the city, and Protagoras should make his choice between the alternatives of private or public conversation on the basis of this information about Hippocrates. This was the point we reached last time, I take it. And now we continue at this point, 316c5. Protagoras says, first: "You correctly take precaution on my behalf." "Taking precaution" is in Greek a verb from which the name Prometheus is derived. Socrates is a kind of Prometheus, a foreseer; providence for Protagoras. And now will you read that?

Mr. Reinken:
Thank you, Socrates for your consideration of me— (316c)

LS: It is a bit more than consideration: taking forethought on my behalf. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
for your forethought regarding me. For certainly a foreigner finding his way into—

LS: May I add he does not simply say a foreigner or stranger but he says an *hombre*.[1] He knows what kind of man he is. It has here the meaning almost which in present-day jargon the word "personality" would entail. A foreign personality. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

finding his way into great cities, and persuading the flower of the youth in them to leave the company of others, kinsmen or strangers, old or young, and live with him, under the idea that they will be improved by their association with him— (316c-d)

LS: Literally, "in order to become better through being together with him." You know, being together; I explained the ambiguity already. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
ought to be very cautious. Great jealousies are aroused by his proceedings, and he is the subject of many enmities and conspiracies. (316d)

LS: Now jealousies, *phthonoi*, is the plural of the Greek word *phthonos* which means envy. Protagoras is thankful to Socrates for his forethought. Men like Protagoras are in danger. We find a reference to the danger also in the *Gorgias*, which you might consult: 456c to 457b. Gorgias says there: "Rhetoric is a very powerful thing and therefore distrusted, for it may be used unjustly." But there is no reference to the injustice of sophistry in Protagoras's speech. On the contrary, being together with Protagoras makes those who are together with him better. So what does he have to fear? Well, precisely this: because people are not merely concerned with their sons becoming better but they are all very much concerned with by whom, through whom, the sons become better. They want the sons to become better through them and not through foreigners, or at any rate people other than themselves. There is a passage on this subject in Xenophon's *Education of Cyrus*, book 3, chapter 1, section 38 following. I read to you:

When the company broke up after the evening meal, Cyrus asked Tigranes [an Armenian prince—LS], "Tell me where is that friend of yours who used to hunt with us and whom, as it seemed to me, you admired so much?" "Do you not know," Tigranes said, "that my father put him to death?" "And why?" said Cyrus, "What fault did he find with him?" The son: "He thought he corrupted me [the phrase used, applied to Socrates in the accusation—LS] and yet I tell you Cyrus he was so gentle and so brave, so beautiful in soul that when he came to die he called me to him and said, 'Do not be angry with your father, Tigranes, for putting me to death. What he does is not done from malice but from ignorance. And the sins of ignorance I hold are unintentional.'" And at that Cyrus could not but say, "Poor soul, I grieve for him." But the king [the father who put him to death, i.e., the man who did to that wise man what the city of Athens did to Socrates—LS] spoke in his own defense, "Remember this, Cyrus, that the man who finds another with his wife kills him not simply because he believes that he has turned the woman to folly but because he has robbed him of her love. Even so I was envious of that man who seemed to put himself between my son and me and steal away his respect."[i]

So in other words, Socrates was killed by the fathers because they were envious of Socrates. That is a very important consideration because it is ordinarily not stated; for example, it is not stated in the *Apology of Socrates* or elsewhere by Plato. But it is important—not all fathers were envious because some of them acquitted Socrates, as you

[i] Strauss reads from *The Education of Cyrus*, trans. H. G. Dakyns (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1914).

know—but this is an important consideration, and it is here indicated by Protagoras in his own case.

A man in Protagoras's position must use caution, this much is clear. Now if this is so, what would follow for the practical question at hand: Should there be a private or public discussion? What is more cautious, a private or public [discussion]? Well, you seem to know, Mr. Levy.

Mr. Levy: Private conversation is usually more . . .

LS: Yes. Now let us see whether that is the conclusion which Protagoras draws.

Mr. Reinken: But only if it's not known to take place.

LS: Pardon?

Mr. Reinken: A private discussion, the fact of which is also private.

LS: Yes, but still, if it is not particularly emphasized, no one else would know that Protagoras had said it should be private. They talk to him privately and it is just: Let us talk privately. No one else hears it; what suspicion could this arouse?

Student: Socrates has come up to him in public, said that Hippocrates desires to be educated by Protagoras, and he says that it is for Protagoras to say whether this should be private or public. If Protagoras says it is to be private, then Protagoras is telling everybody else in this whole room—

LS: Oh, no. The other people come to them only later; only those surrounding Protagoras, i.e., his adherents. But look at it: not every private conversation is of such dangers. For example, it could very well be that the question of remuneration be discussed, which is surely properly treated privately but is in no way to be regarded as dangerously private. Yes? We do many things only in private without incurring any suspicion. You can figure that out for yourself very well. Now go on, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:
[Protag.]: Now the art of the Sophist is, as I believe, of great—

LS: Now let us see: "I assert." I do not know why they do this kind of thing, because there is no doubt about it. "I assert," "I" underlined. "*I* assert," i.e., that is an assertion peculiar to me, that the sophistic art is old. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
of great antiquity, but in ancient times those who practiced it, fearing this odium, veiled and disguised themselves under various names, some under those of poets, as Homer, Hesiod, and Simonides; some of mystic initiates and prophets, as Orpheus and Musaeus; and some, as I observe, even under the name of gymnastic masters, like Iccus of

Tarentum, or the more recently celebrated Herodicus, now of Selymbria and formerly of Megara— (316d-e)

LS: In other words, a man who changed his domicile, probably because he was exiled or something. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
who is a first-rate Sophist. Your own Agathocles pretended to be a musician, but was really an eminent Sophist; also Pythocleides the Cean; and there were many others. All of them, as I was saying, adopted these arts as veils or disguises because they were afraid of the odium they would incur. (316e)

LS: One should really translate literally: "they envied," namely, this envy of the fathers. So Protagoras gives already here by indication his decision. There will be no private conversation, because I am not afraid. Sophistry is an old thing. But the former sophists and some present ones conceal their being sophists because sophistry is hated, distrusted, an object of envy. Protagoras reveals here nine men as sophists. Homer is the leading figure. The central ones are Orpheus and Musaeus, if you count properly. Now Protagoras, we have seen, was a kind of Orpheus and described as such by Socrates. Yes. To repeat the main point: these were the older sophists, "sophists" here in the wide sense of wise men, they concealed their being sophists. They concealed their wisdom because of its dangerous character. And Protagoras does not do it. Why? Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
But that is not my way, for I do not believe that they effected their purpose. The authorities in the various cities did not fail to see through their pretence— (316e-317a)

LS: More literal translation, "the powerful human beings," not *andres*, not *hombres*, the powerful human beings in the cities, they did not escape. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And as for the people—

LS: "The many."

Mr. Reinken:
as for the many, they have no understanding and only repeat what their leaders are pleased to tell them. (317a)

LS: Literally, "the many do not notice anything, so to speak." They are just plain dumb. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Now to run away without being able to make good one's escape and to get caught is a great folly, and it invariably increases the enmity of mankind.

LS: "Of the human beings." You see the point—the joke here is this: *hombres* distinguished from mere human beings, but there is another distinction: *gods* and human beings. The *hombres* are almost related to the mass of men as gods are to human beings. The classic passage regarding this distinction is in Xenophon's *Hiero*, chapter 7, which you might read. I only hope the translation doesn't ruin these points. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
it increases the enmity of human beings. For in addition to his other shortcomings they regard the runaway as a desperado.

LS: No, no. "In addition to this, they regard him also as a scoundrel." In other words, the other thing was they hate him because they are envious of him. But men can be envious of very decent men, and there is no reflection on the character of the men implied if people are envious of them. But in addition, since he uses concealment, he is also regarded as a scoundrel. So concealment of sophistry takes place out of fear of the most powerful men of the city, who are clever; and therefore the concealment is ineffectual and hence foolish, for it increases the danger. Suspicion on top of envy. In other words, the wise men of old were mistaken. And Protagoras has this characteristic posture which we know so well from later times, the contempt for antiquity: These wise men so worshiped and revered are not wise. I am wise.

The many do not notice anything. This is of course a harsh statement to make in a democracy as Athens was at that time, but he could make it safely here because those present are not democrats. You know that is a kind of the cream. But even the men powerful in the city are only human beings, whereas these wise man of the past are *andres*, *hombres*. These things do not come out in translation, but I thought I should mention it. Now Mr. Shulsky.

Mr. Shulsky: Is that true, that in fact these men ran into trouble because they were suspected of being sophists, these men being mentioned?

LS: Well, he does not give us proof in any of these cases, but perhaps he suppressed the examples where evidence of persecution existed. That could be. But he merely says it on the basis of his experience and the funniest thing, if I may mention it in passing, is this: that shortly after, Protagoras himself was the object of persecution, and because of his alleged impiety his books were burned and he was expelled from Athens. This passage is ironical in that sense, that it shows that Protagoras claims to be particularly prudent (and also in making his choice here and now, before our eyes) and he is in fact not prudent. Now let us go on where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
Therefore, I take an entirely opposite course, and acknowledge myself to be a Sophist and instructor of mankind. (317b)

LS: Of "human beings," that is very important. Not of *hombres*. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Such an open acknowledgment appears to me to be a better sort of caution than concealment. Nor do I neglect other precautions, and therefore I hope, as I may say, by the favor of heaven that no harm will come of the acknowledgment that I am a Sophist. (317b-c)

LS: Yes, "to speak with god." Now Protagoras is the first to speak up, and that is indicated by his name: *Prōtos agoreuin*. Candor, we see here, is a kind of caution. In other words, it is not simple candor, it is a calculated candor. Yet it is not enough for Protagoras's protection. He needs also other kinds of precautionary measures, and the question is of course whether this reference to "with god's help" is not also part of his precautions. Now let us go on. Never forget the fact that shortly after, all his precautionary measures proved to be inadequate. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And I have been now many years in the profession—for all my years when added up are many. There is no one here present of whom, in terms of age, I might not be the father. Wherefore I should much prefer conversing with you about all that, if you want to speak with me, in the presence of the company inside. (317c)

LS: Of everyone; of all who are inside. Yes? Good. Now in other words, the conclusion is: candor, public discussion of everything. But it is not quite public, as you see. Mr. Dry?

Mr. Dry: Because it is a select company inside.

LS: Sure. Yes, it's a qualified one. How successful Protagoras's devices are is shown by his longevity. I mean, for seventy years—he lived 'til about seventy years, we know from another Platonic dialogue.[ii] Like somebody else: Socrates, yes. He will therefore answer Socrates's and Hippocrates's questions in public, if only before the indoor public. The irony is this: Protagoras was persecuted on account of impiety, and there is no evidence that the wise men of old were. That is a point we made before; that's quite true. So it shows Protagoras's lack of practical wisdom. One can also say that to emphasize one's candor is to make people doubt one's candor. You probably know people who use the expression, "Frankly, I do not know," when you ask them about the time, and they are in most cases people very little given to candor when they speak of that. And here we have a larger example. In Plato's dialogue *Theaetetus*, 180c to d, we read this: "As Socrates approves the way of the men of old, who hid things with the help of poetry, whereas a more recent wiser man states them openly so that even shoemakers can learn their wisdom." That refers to the same phenomenon which Protagoras has in mind. One can say with the necessary qualification [that] this is precisely what enlightenment means: to broadcast the things which previously were a preserve of a minority. And now?

Mr. Reinken:

[ii] Plato, *Meno* 91e3–5.

[Soc.:] As I suspected that he would like to have a little display and glorification in the presence of Prodicus and Hippias, and would gladly show us to them in the light of admirers— (317d)

LS: "Lovers." Lovers.

Mr. Reinken:
I said: But why should we not summon Prodicus and Hippias and their friends to hear us? Very good, he said.

LS: Now Socrates might have suggested the participation of Prodicus and Hippias anyway. You recall that in 314b to c, he said something about a deliberation with wiser men about whether it is wise for Hippocrates to become the pupil of Protagoras. But Protagoras's vanity makes it compulsory for Socrates to invite this large company. Socrates, as he says here, has come to suspect on the basis of Protagoras's words that we can have the conversation in front of everyone indoors; that Protagoras prefers public discussion not in order to show his frankness, but in order to show off before his competitors. He divines Protagoras's wish. And therefore he says politely: "Prodicus and Hippias should listen to *us*," not "to you." You see how little Socrates says? Yes?

Student: Actually, this conversation is not very public because the others are also sophists, aren't they?

LS: Yes. This is what I meant. But there are also Athenians there, you know, non-sophists, I mean, like Callias, and like the sons of Pericles, and so on, [2]the cream of Athenian society. Well, like in the eighteenth century, when a considerable part of the French nobility went along with the *philosophes*, as they were called at the time, and only through the French Revolution did they learn that this was not wise [laughter] and then they changed their minds. Yes? But [here] the situation is quite different because this was not a social movement tending towards the redistribution of property, you know that was . . . But we shall see something very soon about the way in which they are threatened,[3] these people of the upper classes. Now let us go on where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
Suppose, said Callias, that we stage your regular meeting in which you may sit and discuss. This was agreed upon, and great delight was felt at the prospect of hearing wise men talk; we ourselves took the benches and couches and arranged them by Hippias, where the other benches had been already placed. Meanwhile Callias and Alcibiades got Prodicus out of bed and brought in him and his companions. (317d-e)

LS: Yes. Now you see there is a certain emphasis on Hippias, the benches, rather than on Prodicus, this fear of the beds or couches. But on the other hand, Prodicus is much more deferentially treated than Hippias. He is brought in by Callias—who is not only the owner of the house but, as will appear later, the bottle holder for Protagoras—and by Alcibiades, the bottleholder for Socrates. Callias is surely responsible for the comfort of the characters of the conversation. He asks them to sit down, and the conversation takes

place in the region of Hippias, the physicist. They all expect a dialogue between the sophists, not between Protagoras and Socrates; so that it will become a dialogue between Protagoras and Socrates is a surprise, because Socrates is not such a famous man as these three sophists are. Socrates is still fairly young. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
When we were all seated, Protagoras said: Now that the company is assembled, Socrates, tell me about the young man of whom you were just now speaking. (317e)

LS: You see Protagoras does not want a full restatement of what Socrates had told him privately, only that part which concerns Hippocrates, not the part dealing with the question of whether it should be a public or a private discussion. One can say: Of course not, because this has been settled. How does Socrates state now the issue in public? Because previously it was a private statement.

Mr. Reinken:
I replied: I will begin again at the same point, Protagoras, and tell you once more the purport of my visit. This is my friend Hippocrates— (318a)

LS: Now "friend" is of course not there: "Hippocrates here," "this here Hippocrates."

Mr. Reinken:
This is Hippocrates, who is desirous of making your acquaintance—

LS: Literally, "of being together with you."

Mr. Reinken:
who is desirous of being with you. He would like to know what will happen to him if he associates with you.

LS: "If he is with you."

Mr. Reinken:
If he is with you. I have no more to say. (317e-318a)

LS: "This much, not more, is our speech." Now this is a repetition of that speech we had in 316b to c. Now repetitions in authors like Plato are not like repetitions in a master's thesis and many, many other books. There is never a mere repetition, which means never a literal repetition. There is always a deviation: an omission or addition, or both, and the changes are in a way more important than what is common to the two or more statements. Now if we compare these two statements here, we see Socrates omits now the description of Hippocrates. [4]He says "Hippocrates here"; he doesn't say the other thing. And he adds what he didn't say before: Hippocrates wishes to know what would happen to him if he becomes your pupil. Since he omits now the reference to Hippocrates's political intention in particular, it becomes a question of what Protagoras will teach him, for after all he might wish to become a sophist himself, as we have seen. Those who hear only the

repetition, what we have read now, must understand Protagoras's answer to apply to all potential pupils. Or else they must admire Protagoras's divinatory power, as if he had guessed at this boy's political ambitions because Socrates had not told that in their presence. Do you see that point? Good. Yes, go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Protagoras answered: Young man, if you are[iii] with me, on the very first day you will be in a position to return home a better man than you came, and better on the second day than on the first, and better every day than you were on the day before. (318a-b)

LS: Now what he says at the beginning means, more literally, "Protagoras had taken up" or "seized," meaning a sudden answer. It is not said of him, as it's said immediately afterward of Socrates, that he had heard or listened. Protagoras replies as you see to Hippocrates, not to Socrates. He takes over. Socrates has introduced him, has come as a kind of chaperone, but now he is out of the picture. But Socrates is not so easily pushed aside: he replies, naturally, for he is the one who asked on behalf of young Hippocrates.

I believe the situation is now clear. Now everyone knows why Hippocrates came, and [why] Socrates came; and Protagoras has now given them an answer: he educates human beings; that means he makes them better. And the implication is [that] he does this better than anybody else, otherwise there would be no interest. Now what does Socrates say?

Mr. Reinken:
When I heard this, I said: Protagoras, I do not at all wonder at hearing you say this; even at your age, and with all your wisdom, if any one were to teach you what you did not know before, you would become better, no doubt— (318b)

LS: Socrates deflates his claim immediately: Everyone who teaches somebody else anything, makes him better. So this is not an astounding or extraordinary claim. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
But please answer in a different way—I will explain how by an example. Let me suppose that Hippocrates, instead of desiring your acquaintance—to be with you, wished to be with[iv] the young man Zeuxippus of Heraclea, who has lately been in Athens, and he had come to him as he has come to you, and had heard him say, as he has heard you say, that every day he would grow and become better if he were with him: and then suppose that he were to ask him, "In what shall I become better, and in what shall I grow?" Zeuxippus would answer, "In painting." And suppose that he went to Orthagoras the Theban, and heard him say the same thing you said, and asked him, "In what shall I become better day by day if I am with you?" He would reply, "In flute-playing." Now I want you to make the same sort of answer to this young man and to me, who am asking questions on his account. When you say that on the first day on which Hippocrates is with[v] Protagoras he

[iii] In the translation: "associate"
[iv] In the translation: "become acquainted with"
[v] In the translation: "associates with"

will return home a better man, and on every day will grow in like manner—in what, Protagoras, will he be better, and about what? (318b-d)

LS: Yes. Now Socrates deflates the claim by assuming that better means wiser and wiser means wiser in an art, in this or that art. And therefore there is nothing particular about it: every artisan would—every shoemaker could rightly say that he makes his apprentice better every day, namely, better at shoemaking. The examples here are of course not shoemaking but both music and silence. In both examples, the teachers are strangers. The way in which Socrates puts the question is of course quite common, but there is one difference from examples we have seen here and in the *Gorgias*. Do you see that point?

Student: . . . the building art.

LS: No, in the way in which he phrases the question. Well, he does not ask Protagoras to give the answer. In the case of Zeuxippus it is painting; in the case of Orthagoras it is flute-playing. He does not put Protagoras to the indignity of having to answer the question of what the two arts of these men are, perhaps because Protagoras is so high, so aloof, that he would not know these two artisans, one of whom is still very young. But also it would be improper for Socrates to ask this kind of question of a personality of the stature of Protagoras. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
When Protagoras heard me say this he replied—

LS: Now he had *heard*, Protagoras, had not merely [answered]. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
You ask good questions, Socrates, and I like to answer a question which is well put.

LS: So now he replies to Socrates, of course, and no longer to Hippocrates. Hippocrates could not have asked him well: *kalōs*, beautifully. Hippocrates could not have put such questions to him as Socrates could, that goes without saying. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
If Hippocrates comes to me he will not experience the sort of drudgery with which other Sophists are in the habit of insulting their pupils who, when they have just escaped from the arts, are taken and driven back into them by these teachers, and made to learn calculation, and astronomy, and geometry, and music (he gave a look at Hippias as he said this). But if he comes to me, he will learn only that which he comes to learn. And this is prudence in affairs private as well public; he will learn to order his own house in the best manner, and he will be able to speak and act most powerfully in the affairs of the state. (318d-319a)

LS: "Affairs of the city," of course. And now you see Protagoras claims to be superior to all other sophists. In a way he accepts the popular judgment on the sophists, in his way, but with the exception of himself. He does not teach arts, for he knows through his

private conversation with Socrates, of course, what Hippocrates wishes to learn. And [5]he mentions here with special emphasis the mathematics: no mathematics with me. You don't have to worry because these are all mathematical arts, as you can see: reckoning, and astronomy, and geometry, and music. Music obviously has a mathematical implication.

And you see also the virtue of the narrated dialogue again. This remark, that at this point Protagoras gave a dirty look in the direction of Hippias, could not have been brought out in a performed dialogue but only in a narrated one. And so there will be nothing of the kind. And what will he teach to him? *Euboulia.* It is not sufficiently translated by "prudence." It means something more specific: being well advised, being good at advice regarding the domestic things: "So that he can administer his house in the best manner. And about the affairs of the city so that he will be most able both to do and to say the things of the city." There is a very great difference in what he says about his economic teaching and his political teaching. He doesn't say that he will learn from him to administer the affairs of the city in the best manner; he says this only regarding his own household.

Protagoras does not teach mathematics, we see here also, but only the human things—like Socrates, according to a popular notion based on quite a few passages in Plato and Xenophon. So in other words, Protagoras has made clear what it is that he teaches, that it is clearly not painting, and not flute-playing, nor mathematics, nor of course shoemaking and quite a few other things. It is not an art at all, this being well advised—let us say prudence. Let us say prudence. Now how does Socrates interpret that statement?

Mr. Reinken:
Do I understand you, I said, and is your meaning that you teach the art of politics, and that you promise to make men good citizens? (319a)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. Here he uses the word *hombres,* ya? The political *technē,* the political art, or political science. If this is really a very early dialogue, as people say it is, this would be the first occurrence of the term "political science," and we as political scientists have to respect it properly. Socrates, you see, drops here the distinction between the art regarding the household and the political art and speaks only of the political art. It is wise for him to drop this reference to the economic art because the economic art, the art of ruling the household, is of course a monarchical thing—the father—and therefore it is compared very easily with the royal art: the father rules the household in a way in which a king rules a kingdom. Now but Socrates makes one great—yes?

Student: How about the word that is translated by the word prudence?

LS: *Euboulia*, good at giving advice to oneself or others. In other words, it is not in itself the act of practical choice, giving advice. But it can of course be easily understood. Aristotle makes a distinction in the sixth book of the *Ethics*;[vi] he speaks of this particular thing, *euboulia*, by itself, and [6]he makes very clear that there is a difference, but that is

[vi] *Nicomachean Ethics* 6.9.

not necessarily the Platonic usage. But it is of some interest that Protagoras calls it well-advisedness rather than *phronesis*, prudence. Yes, Mr. . . . ?

Student: You said that Socrates was wise to drop the discussion of the household science—

LS: Even the mention of it, because of the monarchic implications.

Student: Well, why does he want to drop the monarchic implications?

LS: Well, we are in Athens, and Protagoras is a stranger: that will come out very clearly. And Socrates wants to help Protagoras a bit against unfair attacks. You see that Protagoras's claim as interpreted by Socrates is that Protagoras teaches the political art. He does not teach the sophistic art. And also Protagoras teaches an *art*, whether he likes it or not. And now that is also important; that's the reason why he says now *hombres*—he-men or however you'd translate it. Contrary to your contempt for the political leaders, of which he had spoken before, you must regard them as *hombres*, as another advisor, you see. [7]You cannot speak in this contemptuous way here in Athens of the political leaders.

Now Protagoras as you see here from his answer is highly pleased with Socrates's restatement of his claim. Yes?

Mr. Shulsky: Well, another thing that Socrates does here is to blur the distinction between [the economic art and the political art]. I mean, Protagoras said what he taught. He teaches the well-ordering of the household and the way to act and speak well in the city. But Socrates makes him almost say that he teaches the well-ordering of the city, how to make the people good citizens—

LS: In a way, but—

Mr. Shulsky: Which isn't what Protagoras said, really.

LS: That is true, yes. But since he had spoken before that he is educating human beings and that they become better by being with him, this is not a change. Yes?

Student: Well, do they become better at being citizens in the sense of being able to well order the city, or do they become better at getting what they want—

LS: Yes. This we do not yet know. I mean, there is a certain ambiguity. That's exactly the point. We do not yet know that. But Protagoras claims to educate human beings. He claims that they become better simply, and that word everyone understands in the sense of the common meaning, what we would [call] [8]morally better. But also better politically, and in other words, he makes them better citizens, better rulers of the city. Yes?

Student: When he said, "What do you mean by that?" Protagoras answered that he means "more influential." And Socrates is . . .

LS: Something of this kind was meant by Mr. Shulsky. But is this not also a great, great kindness of Socrates, to try to prevent him from elaborating this point and to present himself to the Athenians as truly respectable and not only famous in the world?

Same Student: Well, the thing is that Socrates usually has some strategy in mind when he does a thing like that. He was never so nice to Gorgias, for example.

LS: Yes, but in the case of Gorgias, Gorgias came into trouble immediately because he made this ambiguous statement about the relation of rhetoric to justice,[9] that rhetoric can be unjustly used. Protagoras has said nothing of this kind. These things will come out. And in addition, when Socrates came to Gorgias, there was no young boy like Hippocrates present; these were all mature and old men. You know? His responsibility is much greater here than it is in the *Gorgias*. Yes?

Student: I'm confused on the two senses in which the words referring to humanity or mankind are used, one of which you make a distinction by using "*hombres.*" I wish you would comment.

LS: All right, I will repeat it. I will write it. [LS writes on the blackboard] I think you know . . . symbols. *Anthrōpos*: human being. *Anēr*: *hombre*. You know sufficiently Spanish to understand?

Student: Yes, sir.

LS: It's the only Spanish word which I know. [Laughter] . . . So that [*anthrōpos*] is very low; you say it of a slave or any inferior person, it's nothing. It's only a member of the human species. "Philanthropic," the word is derived from that. It means something like, "Some people like dogs, others like horses, others like birds, and some like these other bad kids" [laughter], and so it doesn't have a very high meaning originally. Now Cyrus, Xenophon's Cyrus, is praised because of his love of human beings, which, as a study of his *Education of Cyrus* shows, was a very meretricious thing. He loved human beings because he needed them so badly in order to become an *anēr* of the highest order. So is it clear now?

Student: Yes.

LS: And of course this [*anthrōpos*] includes both sexes, and this [*anēr*] is limited only to members of the male sex. Do you see that? The other implication—I hate to say that, but I have to. [Laughter] Now where was I? Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken: *Mann*/*Mensch* is the identical distinction in German, isn't it?

LS: Yes, but in German, when you say, "Das ist ein mensch," it means more when you say it empathetically.

Mr. Reinken: More pejorative?

LS: No, no. A true human being, with a heart. So that is not so simple. Am I not right, Mr. Frankel? That's different. Yes.

So where do we stand now? We know now finally—and much quicker than in the case of Gorgias, by the way—what Protagoras's art is: the political art. And everyone knows what the political art is, whereas when we spoke of rhetoric in the *Gorgias*, no one knew what it was until Socrates made his long speech. So now let us see how Socrates goes from here, in a8.

Mr. Reinken:
Then, I said, you possess a noble art indeed, if you really do possess it. For I will freely confess to you, Protagoras, that I have a doubt whether this art is capable of being taught—

LS: No, wait a moment. "For *you*, at any rate, nothing else will be said except what I think." Socrates is very frank to Protagoras, he says. He would not say everything he thinks to anyone.[vii] But is he so very frank? Is he wholly frank? Does he tell Protagoras everything he thinks about him? Well, I think we have some simple proofs that he did not. Yes?

Mr. Bruell: His previous definition of a sophist to Hippocrates.

LS: Yes, and even here when he said, for example, [that] he suspected that Protagoras wanted to show off, he did not of course say this to Protagoras. But here one can get an easy way out by saying frankness does not require that you say everything you think, but only that you do not say anything which you do not think. Whether that is good enough is a long question. Yes. Now comes Socrates's long speech. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
I have a doubt whether this art is capable of being taught, and yet I know not how to disbelieve your assertion. And I ought to tell you why I am of opinion that this art cannot be taught or communicated by man to man. (319b)

LS: In other words, it might conceivably be of divine origin. That is not a teachable art. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
I say that the Athenians are a wise people, and indeed they are esteemed to be such by the other Hellenes. Now I observe that when we are met together in the Assembly—

[vii] Here it seems that someone enters the room to deliver something to Strauss, whom he thanks.

LS: Do you see this nice transition? "*I* say that the Athenians are wise. When *we* assemble." Socrates belongs to this wise group, of course.

Mr. Reinken:
when we are met together in the Assembly, and the matter in hand relates to building, the builders are summoned as advisers; when the question is one of shipbuilding, then the shipwrights; and the like of other arts which they think capable of being taught and learned. And if some person offers to give them advice who is not supposed by them to be an expert craftsman, even though he be good-looking and rich and noble, they will not listen to him, but laugh and hoot at him until either he is clamored down and retires of himself, or, if he persists, he is dragged away or put out by the constables at the command of the prytanes. This is their way of behaving about specialists in the arts. (319b-c)

LS: No, no: about those things which they believe to be susceptible, or possible subjects of arts. What they believe to be, not what are in fact subjects of arts. We will come back to that.

Mr. Reinken:
what they believe to be subjects of specialties. But when the question concerns an affair of state, then everybody is free to get up and give advice—carpenter, tinker, cobbler, passenger and shipowner, rich and poor, high and low—

LS: "Noble and base." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
noble and base—and no one reproaches him, as in the former case, with not having learned and having no teacher, and yet giving advice; evidently, because they are under the impression that this sort of knowledge cannot be taught. (319c-d)

LS: Yes. "Evidently because they do not think this is teachable." Now Socrates says, then: "I do not believe that there is a political art. Such a faculty would have to be of divine origin." This is in a way the foreshadowing of Protagoras's myth, following later, but this is not given here. You see, at the beginning of this speech in b3 he says "I" very emphatically: *I* assert. I, that individual, Socrates asserted—Well, the Athenians are wise, and of course everyone else says the same, and I, Socrates, happen to belong to them. So therefore, he is derivatively also wise. They do not regard the political art as an art, namely, they do not regard it as teachable. Now this is a clear warning addressed to Protagoras: Athens is a democracy; your very notion of a political art endangers political equality, obviously. If only those who possess the political art are competent to speak or vote on political matters (it's a great question), [there is a great risk]. The public discussion of Protagoras's public subject, namely, the political art, must be conducted in awareness of Protagoras's situation here in Athens.

You see also a bit later what is important here. This twofold distinction is of course as clear today as it was [then]: there are experts and subjects belonging to experts, and political subjects proper which are not subjects for experts. Only the experts can give

some advice, but they cannot as such make a political decision. But Socrates does not speak here of simply expertise but of *supposed* expertise as a condition of participation in supposedly technical deliberations. That is very wisely chosen. How can non-experts judge of the extent or the domain of an art? How can they do that? Who can know what is a medical question or not, competently, except a medical man? That's the great difficulty. I mean, when we say that is no longer a medical question, we somehow presuppose to know what the medical art is, unless we should be in a position of a master art which assigns to every particular art its subject; and if a man possesses that master art he would of course also know the domains and limitations of every particular art.

Now he mentions here when he speaks of technical discussions that beauty, wealth, and nobility are not considered, whereas, the implication is, they are naturally considered, reasonably considered, in political discussions. Surely wealth is an important consideration in the political domain, even in a democracy, although it is not legally so but factually. And nobility, well, old families I think still face . . . and beauty has its ambiguity. A very attractive-looking man has certain advantages which others who are not attractive wouldn't have, but it can also refer to the beauty of the soul, to the gentlemanship, *kalokagathia*.

Now in the enumeration of the artisans here, the shoemakers are in the center. The art of the shoemaker is a protective art, obviously: it protects our feet. And the political art is also a protective art: generals save cities, protect cities. But it is low, literally, because it protects the lowest part of our body. Shoemakers seem to have played in Athens a role which, at least in the world in which I grew up, tailors played—you know, that pale-faced man sitting at home and lacking the kind of virility that a blacksmith, for example, surely would have. Good. I believe we can stop here.

So it's clear that the political authority of the city of Athens rules out the possibility of a political art. That is clear. Now we come beyond that, because someone might perhaps say that cities are not most competent in judging these matters. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: Is Socrates playing a little with Protagoras here? Because Socrates thrusts the term "art" on him. Protagoras originally claimed: I make him better. This would be acceptable in a democratic society. We want our children to be nicer: I make them nicer. Then Socrates said: No, you teach an art—ah, an art, that's undemocratic.

LS: Very good. We have to take this up later, but since you brought it up we should at least say a word about it. In other words, if Protagoras were to teach simple, ordinary decency he should be highly welcome to any city. The political art is something very different from ordinary decency. And the ambiguity that at one place he means ordinary decency and in another he means the political art is crucial for the whole argument. But we cannot clear up this ambiguity before we are through. Perhaps we can make a provisional effort to understand it. What is the way leading from ordinary decency to the political art?—[viii]

[viii] The tape was changed at this point.

LS: —Oh, I see.

Student: . . . question of his . . . notion of art would be . . .

LS: Mr. Reinken explained . . . I agreed with that because Protagoras himself is responsible for this ambiguity. But what is at the bottom of this? And with what right does anyone, Protagoras or Socrates or whoever it might be, make this easy transition from ordinary decency to the political art? It is not merely accidental or due to some corruption of the sophistic mind. Yes?

Mr. Bruell: Could it be because the political art has to do with foreign relations as well as internal justice? That it requires—

LS: Yes. Well, in other words, the statesman is supposed to make the citizens better in the sense of ordinary decency, i.e., he must have ordinary decency to a much higher degree insofar as he can communicate to the whole community what the ordinary man of ordinary decency cannot do. Something of this kind. You want to say something?

Mr. Shulsky: Well, if he is in the political arena, he also has to deal with things which can't be handled as easily according to the rules of a private man. He has to know how the rules of ordinary decency are best followed in a situation, you know involves . . . of one sort or the other, which the ordinary man would not run into.

LS: That would also mean that he is better at ordinary decency than the ordinary decent man is.

Mr. Shulsky: Yes, but he might in fact have to do things which don't look—

LS: Now that is of course excluded from this stage of the argument. That is a longer question which will play a great role later on. Yes. Now we have seen then that the authority of the city of Athens disallows Protagoras's claim. But the authority of the city of Athens, or of any city, is not necessarily the highest authority. Therefore, let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:
And not only is this true of cities,[ix] but of individuals. The best and wisest of our citizens are unable to impart their political wisdom to others— (319d-e)

LS: No, "are not able to impart that virtue." Let us translate this more literally.

Mr. Reinken:
that virtue to others; as, for example, Pericles, the father of these young men, who gave them excellent instruction in all that could be learned from masters; in his own department of politics, he neither taught them— (319e)

[ix] In the translation: "of the state."

LS: No, [10]"in that in which he himself was wise." He does not mention politics here although it is implied, but it is important that it's not mentioned.

Mr. Reinken:
that in which he himself was wise—

LS: *Is* wise.

Mr. Reinken:
is wise—he neither taught them nor gave them—

LS: "Teaches them." I mean, neither educates them himself nor hands them over to somebody else.

Mr. Reinken:
nor gives them teachers, but they were allowed to wander at their own free will in a sort of hope that they would light upon virtue of their own accord. (319e-320a)

LS: Yes. So you see he calls now wisdom what he called previously virtue. He changed that. That virtue is wisdom is somehow implied here. Incidentally, we get here some of the first glimpses regarding the dramatic date of the dialogue. [It is] prior to Pericles's death, obviously, because Pericles is spoken of in the present tense. Pericles died in 429. The dialogue generally is prior to the Peloponnesian War. Socrates was still in his late forties, relatively young. Good. Now Pericles is *the* authority, as you will see from the sequel. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Or take another example. There was Cleinias the younger brother of our friend Alcibiades—

LS: Now, again: "of Alcibiades, this here Alcibiades."

Mr. Reinken:
of Alcibiades here, of whom this very same Pericles was the guardian. And he being in fact under the apprehension that Cleinias would be corrupted by Alcibiades—

LS: "Would *of course* be corrupted by Alcibiades."

Mr. Reinken:
would of course be corrupted by Alcibiades, took him away, and placed him in the house of Ariphron to be educated. But before six months had elapsed, Ariphron sent him back, not knowing what to do with him. And I could mention numberless other instances of persons who were good themselves, and never yet made any one else good, whether a member of their family or a stranger. (320a-b)

LS: Now Pericles is *the* authority regarding private things as distinguished from political matters. Protagoras was an acquaintance of Pericles. On Pericles's instigation, Protagoras became a legislator of a newly founded colony whose regime was patterned after that of Athens. This we do not know from Plato but from a later author.[x]

Socrates's favorite, Alcibiades, we see here is a notorious corruptor of the young, perhaps a worse one than the sophists since we do not yet know enough about that. Alcibiades himself speaks in the dialogue called *First Alcibiades* of Cleinias as a madman and [of] the two sons of Pericles as two fools.[xi] So the main point here is [that] virtue is not teachable. Neither the *polis* assumes that, nor the best men in the *polis* assume that. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Now I, Protagoras, having these examples before me, am inclined to think that virtue cannot be taught. (320b)

LS: You see again the transition. Now it is perfectly clear: virtue in general, without any specification. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
But then again, when I listen to your words I waver and am disposed to think that there must be something in what you say, because I believe that you have great experience and learning and invention.

LS: "That you have experience in many things, have learned many things, and some things you have even invented yourself." That is the maximum of what you can expect. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and some things you have even invented. And I wish that you would, if possible, show me a little more clearly that virtue can be taught. Will you be so good? (320b-c)

LS: Here the word virtue, in Greek *arēte*, is even used with the article to make it more specific still that "the" virtue is not teachable.

Now [about] the question which was brought up before. Originally, he spoke simply of well-advisedness, and how do we come from well-advisedness to virtue? By virtue, we think of course primarily of what Aristotle later on called moral virtue. How can we understand that? Well, as Aristotle himself teaches us: no moral virtue without prudence. But if moral virtue is to be *teachable*, as Protagoras presupposes as a matter of course, it must be identical with the intellectual ingredient of moral virtue, i.e., virtue must be practical wisdom—or, generally stated, virtue must be wisdom, virtue must be knowledge. That is implied. When Socrates states [that] virtue is knowledge, *epistēmē*, then he formulates in a way what the sophists imply. There are differences, as we shall see later.

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[x] Consider Diogenes Laertius 9.50.
[xi] *First Alcibiades* 118e1–3.

To repeat: Protagoras's claim implies that virtue [is] equal to practical wisdom, equal to science, *technē*, however you might call it, that is, and we must later on see what happens to that. And in a way that is of course a Socratic equation, but Socrates understands it differently than the sophists do, and that is the theme of this dialogue. Yes?

Student: Sir, did you say . . . compared to a *science* or *technē*?

LS: Well, you know in the ordinary usage of this period, the distinction is not so clear. You can speak of *technē*; you can speak of *epistēmē*. The strict definition which Aristotle gives in the *Ethics* especially cannot always be presupposed. But here we have seen Protagoras calling the mathematical sciences *technai*; there is nothing wrong with that. But there is surely a great difference between Socrates and Protagoras in this respect. This will become gradually clear, but we cannot yet know precisely what the difference is. Someone else raised his hand. Mr. Dry?

Mr. Dry: Do you think that this claim of the sophists, which is more than what the rhetoricians made, has something to do with an explanation for why the sophists are held in disrepute in a way that the orator isn't? I'm thinking of Hippocrates's blush and the eunuch. Somehow this is so counter to the democratic feeling—

LS: No, the democratic feeling would not be authoritative for a young boy like Hippocrates. No, that would not be. But the point is that a sophist is a man mostly coming from a relatively small town not comparable to Athens, a stranger, and earning money by services. That's not gentlemanly. That is much more the view of Hippocrates.

Student: What about Gorgias? Did he not need to earn money? Weren't the people who went to learn with him paying him?

LS: Yes, but that is because what he claimed to teach, the art of public speaking, was so manifestly politically important. You know this has to do with both the difference and the non-difference of rhetoric and sophistry. And in the *Gorgias*, the difference between the two is strongly emphasized. Here it is vague. Hitherto we do not yet see a clear difference. That will come out later. Yes?

Student: In this passage, doesn't Socrates reach a ground on which a tyrant could well justify his tyranny? He says that the Athenians say that the arts aren't widely known, such as medicine, and therefore the non-initiated cannot judge the initiated. But we know that Socrates believes that most people are not initiated in the political art too, that's why democracy . . .

LS: Sure, sure.

Student: Well, then couldn't a man who wanted to be a tyrant, say, in the guise of Lincoln, say, or Napoleon, say: Well, I happen to be an expert in the political art as a doctor is in the medical art, and you aren't, so you can't judge my actions.

LS: Yes, but since the tyrant is supposed to be a very unjust man, the tyrant could not possibly say it. But the king could, and Socrates therefore does not hesitate to speak of the royal art.

Same Student: But how could the people, the many complain to the tyrant on the basis of what Socrates has said?

LS: Oh, well, because the tyrant is supposed to be an absolute ignoramus and, in addition, wicked. That's simple.

Same Student: But isn't it possible that a good man could seem to be wicked both in—

LS: Yes, that leads to a deeper stratum into which we cannot enter in this advanced stage of our study. [11]That the kingly art is the highest art is said by Socrates often enough, and the kingly art is by definition an art to be practiced in a monarchy and not in a democracy, sure. Now let us continue where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
[Protag.:] That I will, Socrates, and gladly. But what would you like? Shall I, as an elder, tell you as younger men a myth, or shall I argue out the question? (320c)

LS: "Or should I go through a *logos*." *Mythos* and *logos* are used here as opposites. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
[Soc.:] To this several of the company answered that he should choose for himself. Well, then, he said, I think that the myth will be more interesting.

LS: More gracious, more graceful. Now we have here another case of a choice: no longer now between public or private, but between myth and let us say a rational account. Since it is a choice, it is another test of Protagoras's ability to give himself good advice, to make good or bad choices. Now this time the choice is proposed by Protagoras himself, not by Socrates, as it was in the first case. Again Protagoras is asked, at least by many, to make the choice himself, as you see. And he chooses to tell a myth.[xii] We are not told whether some of them did not say "rather a myth." And so [whether] he complied with them, this we do not know. Now [12]it is reasonable to say that myth-telling is perhaps another of these cautions, these precautionary measures to which Protagoras has referred in his speech about the difference between him and the sophists of olden times. In other words, myth-telling belongs to the qualified character of Protagoras's candor. If this is so, is it prudent to emphasize that he tells a myth? Why does he not simply tell it without making a choice of it, and why does he not even call it a *logos*, a rational account? Socrates himself gives a famous myth at the end of the *Gorgias* [which is] reasonably called by him a *logos*. Someone wants to say something? Mr. Shulsky?

[xii] 320c.

Mr. Shulsky: Well, if he has made a more prudent choice this time than the last time, does this show any influence of Socrates?

LS: We must see. We must see. Before we are through the myth, we cannot judge of the myth. If I may say this: I believe the myth is not very good. [13]It is in a way a wonderful thing, from the point of view of language and so on, but whether it fulfills its function in the context, I am not so sure. Mr. Bruell?

Mr. Bruell: Is there this similarity between the two choices: that Protagoras first raises the question or the choice, and then offers the decision to his interlocutor or interlocutors and they offer it back to him?

LS: Yes. But still, in the first place, he wouldn't have to offer them the choice. In the first place. And in the second place, it is not excluded by the text that some said either a myth or a *logos*, because only *many* said. And so it remains. It is clear; he emphasizes the fact that there is a choice and that he makes the choice, and therefore he is fully responsible for it. And we must see, we are compelled to see, to look out whether the choice was wise. Yes.

And now the famous myth begins, from here until 323a4. We shall not be able to finish the discussion of the myth today, but we can perhaps begin it, unless you want to have a discussion of the point hitherto where we take the myth here. Because it is for many of you, I suppose, the first time that you have read a Platonic myth, as soon as we are through with the myth we will have a digression on the Platonic myth. Yes?

Student: I want to ask a previous question, that possibly Socrates is not fair in concluding that the political art cannot be taught. In the examples that he gives, the fact that in the assembly specialists are called upon in certain areas, but in another area of politics in general, as we discussed, anyone can stand up, no matter who they are, and Socrates says since these people aren't reproached—no matter who stands up, they aren't reproached, Socrates says that evidently the Athenians are under the impression that this sort of knowledge cannot be taught. Is there another conclusion that could be drawn, that possibly this sort of knowledge has been taught to everyone and therefore—

LS: Yes, all right, that could be. But [14]still then the question would arise: Who was your teacher? For example, say a man claims to have medical knowledge, and then you raise the question, if you have any doubt: Show me your diploma. But if it is something which everyone is taught, say, like reading and writing, you don't ask for it because you know that, and the test would be very simple. You would say: Read this letter here. You know, it wouldn't be a test to speak of. That is in itself possible. Well, how is it today? I mean, let us start from what we are more familiar with. It may be that most senators and congressmen have studied law, but clearly to be a lawyer and to be a politician are two very different things. So in other words, law is very helpful for making political decisions, but it is not the same as making political decisions. Do we not still understand by political decisions, decisions which [15]cannot be expert decisions, where only expert decisions can *help*? Take Vietnam or whatever you want. The experts can give you all

kinds of things, and they will give you all interesting cases. There are invariably at least two schools of experts, as you know [laughter], and so they don't help you very much. They give you some arguments against your political opponents, but ultimately you have to make the decision itself. Is it not so? [16]For example, there is this thing, Salk, how is it called, against infantile paralysis,[xiii] [an] expert question, never politically controversial that you should use it, never politically controversial. And other things of the same nature, too: that there should be a proper defense force is not politically controversial. I mean, there are some people, some extremists, some marginal people who would say "no defense force," but that it is politically irrelevant.

A political question is by definition a controversial question which cannot be settled by experts. That still remains, and at all times there exists the hope that there should be some super-expert, some master art which would do regarding the political matters what medicine does for the human body, what shoemakers do with shoes, and so on and so on. But it is, to say the least, still an open question whether such an art exists. Take political science today, which is in a way the child of the *politikē technē* of which Socrates spoke, but it does not claim to be able to solve political questions. The maximum it claims is to tell the political men which of their means are good for their ends, but it explicitly refuses to judge of the ends, as you know. Is it not true? So today we should very easily understand that although from an older point of view, from a pre-1900 point of view, this ground cannot be assumed, it was always understood that there is some knowledge, some science, of the true ends of political society.

Now of course a question would arise here because of there is variety of ends, and [the question of] which end has priority in a given situation is not settled by the general doctrine of ends and of their natural order, because a lower end may rightly demand first claim in a given situation. If I may use again my trite example: the appendectomy, something very low, may be more important in a given situation, more urgent than the highest human activities. The sheer defense of the country—the country's internal problems remain unsolved; only the sheer defense may in a certain situation be given the overriding consideration. Yes?

Student: How would Socrates answer the situation where you have experts disagreeing . . . I mean, you have experts on one side saying it's throat cancer and experts on the other side—

LS: There is a beautiful dialogue about that very subject, the *Laches*. It is not [17]a drug that is under discussion but a certain form of fighting. And there are two experts: the one says it's bad; and the other says it's good. And Socrates says: Well, then we must have recourse to principles. What is the meaning of such a combat training? To make the men better soldiers, better fighters. This belongs to the virtue of courage, manliness. Well, let's first find out what manliness is. And then they come into trouble there, and so much so that they do not answer the question of what manliness is, and, which is in a way more interesting, they completely forget the practical question from which they started. But you know that this is a kind of comedy, because in practice this is impossible. Because in

[xiii] Strauss apparently refers to the Salk vaccine against polio.

practice, a decision must be made either without raising the profoundest question, and you have to adopt this kind of missile or that kind; you have to do something. And then it will be done with some tossing of coins, just as we do in private life. Don't we do that? So therefore, that's it. But nevertheless, the need, the desire for such a master *technē* is absolutely reasonable and may be plausible. Whether it can be fulfilled and to what extent it can be fulfilled is a question. The now-prevailing view, to repeat, is that there cannot be such a master *technē* because the question of the ends is not susceptible of rational discussion. That is now the prevailing view. Even if this were untrue, even if there were a rational understanding of the ends and their order, this discussion might be so deep, so complicated, that it would be of no practical political use. This also could be.[xiv]

We will begin next time with the myth, and if we find the time we will have a discussion of the Platonic myth itself.

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[1] Deleted "you know."
[2] Deleted "you know"
[3] Moved "very soon"
[4] Deleted "you know"
[5] Deleted "these points"
[6] Deleted "where"
[7] Deleted "You know?"
[8] Deleted "say"
[9] Deleted "you know."
[10] Deleted "no, more literally"
[11] Deleted "For the time being"
[12] Deleted "we can say"
[13] Deleted "I mean."
[14] Deleted "then it would be."
[15] Deleted "are not subject to"
[16] Deleted "I mean."
[17] Deleted "medicine"

[xiv] Strauss makes here a brief comment about the time and the need to conclude the class session.

Session 7: April 19, 1965

The Long Speech of Protagoras: *Mythos*
(320c-322d)

Leo Strauss: Now let us continue. We were at the point where the myth begins. Now what was the situation? Protagoras had [1]stated what his claim is, and the claim was that he can teach the political art or virtue—it was not quite clear—and Socrates had doubted whether virtue is teachable. Protagoras said: I will answer your question either by a myth or by a *logos*. And the choice was restored to Protagoras himself, and he said: Well, I think it is better to explain it by a myth. This was the point at 320c8. Now let us read first the beginning.

Mr. Reinken:
[Protag.:] Once upon a time there were gods only, and no mortal creatures. (320c-d)

LS: "Mortal races," "breeds," "kinds" . . .

Mr. Reinken:
But when the destined time came that these also should be created—

LS: No, "should come into being"; "these too should come into being." Now these "too," the mortal races, [2]means that the gods also had come into being, i.e., there was a time when there were no gods. Now is this not difficult? Are the gods not immortal? Yes, but this does not mean that they are unborn. I mean, Zeus was born. [3]But there was a time when there were no gods. Hence the time for the coming into being of the mortal races cannot have been appointed by the gods; surely the time for the coming into being for the gods cannot have been appointed by the gods. This much is clear. Yes?

Student: How can something that comes into being remain forever?

LS: That you have to address to Greek mythology.

Student: Well, Plato raises the question. Does he answer it?

LS: Pardon?

Student: *Plato* raises the question.

LS: He doesn't do it. In a way, Protagoras does it, but even Protagoras is not fully responsible for a myth. Now begin again, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:

But when the destined time came that these also should come into being,[i] the gods fashioned them out of earth and fire and various mixtures of both elements in the interior of the earth. (320d)

LS: Yes. Now which gods, we are not told. They work in the interior of the earth; that means without light, blindly. And these gods are responsible for what is common to all living beings, all animals. In other words, they create what in present-day language would be called living matter. Now if we would compare this sentence of Protagoras with a parallel in the *Timaeus*, when Timaeus presents Plato's cosmology (*Timaeus* 31b to 32c), we would see that Protagoras omits the bond between fire and the earth; and this bond according to the *Timaeus* is proportion. Proportion. You remember his rejection of mathematics in his critique of Hippias in 318e? In other words, it is a much more primitive form of cosmology to which Protagoras here alludes.

Now they are formed in the earth, in the interior of the earth. This expression occurs also in the famous noble lie of the *Republic*, *Republic* 414d to e. The human beings with their instruments and their education were formed within the earth, but not by the gods but by the founders of the city. According to this myth of the *Republic*, there is a single source of the natural, of the arts, and of education (we will see that Protagoras does not assert that), and this source is not divine but the founders of the city. But of course, this noble lie of the *Republic* is admittedly a lie, whereas Protagoras doesn't call it explicitly a lie. He says "myth." We must see. Now where we left off—yes, go on.

Mr. Reinken:
And when they were about to bring them into the light of day, they ordered Prometheus and Epimetheus to equip them and to distribute to them severally their proper qualities. Epimetheus begged Prometheus— (320d)

LS: No, no, he asks him, he bids him. You know, there is a constant change from the past tense to the present tense here, which is of some importance. The molding is still taking place. More generally stated, the myth represents as an event of the past what is in fact always going on. This goes throughout the story. But now let us see. They give the job to Prometheus and Epimetheus. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
"Let me distribute and do you inspect." Prometheus agreed, and Epimetheus made the distribution. There were some to whom he gave strength without swiftness, while he equipped the weaker with swiftness; some he armed, and others he left unarmed— (320d-e)

LS: "To the others he gave an unarmed nature."

Mr. Reinken:
an unarmed nature, and devised for the latter some other means of preservation, making some large and having their size as a protection, and others small, whose nature was to

[i] In the translation: "should be created"

fly in the air or burrow in the ground; this was to be their way of escape. Thus did he compensate them with a view of preventing any race from becoming extinct. And when he had made specific provision against their destruction by one another, he contrived also a means of protecting them against the seasons that come from Zeus, clothing them with close hair and thick skins sufficient to defend them against the winter cold and able to resist the summer heat, so that they might have a natural bed of their own when they wanted to rest. Also he furnished them with hoofs and hard and callous skins under their feet. Then he gave them varieties of food—herb of the soil to some, to others fruits of trees, and to others roots, and to some again he gave other animals as food. And some he made to have few young ones, while those who were their prey were very prolific. And in this manner the race was preserved. (320e-321b)

LS: Yes. Let us stop here for a moment. So here is a new stage: they are no longer the gods but Epimetheus, the man whose thought comes afterward. [He is] the afterthinker, in contradistinction to Prometheus the forethinker. Now the gods are responsible for what we can call loosely living matter. Epimetheus is responsible for the distinctive faculties, powers, or natures of the various species. He is still working underground without light, blindly, just as the gods are. Epimetheus distributes assigned natures. In Greek the word is *nemō*, which is akin to the word *nomos*: convention, law. In other words, the myth here reduces the natures to an act of *nomos* and *nemō*. And this is something distinct from the act of the gods, but it is akin to the act of the gods because it is also still done underground, without light.

Now we come to the result of this strange cooperation between the gods, these gods—"these gods," we don't know which—and Epimetheus.

Mr. Reinken:
Thus did Epimetheus, not being very wise, forget that he had distributed among the brute animals all the qualities which he had to give. (321b-c)

LS: "Brute" means, literally translated, "the speechless ones."

Mr. Reinken:
among the dumb animals, all the qualities which he had to give. And when he came to the race of men, which was still unprovided, he did not know what to do. (321c)

LS: Yes, now let us stop here for one moment. What is suggested here then is this: nature does not take care of man as well as it does of the other animals. Nature is not very wise. The gods who left the work to be completed to Epimetheus and Prometheus are not very wise, because they are indirectly responsible for that. But we must also not forget that Prometheus himself, the forethinker, is not very wise. Why did he permit his not very wise brother to distribute the powers? Well, his lack of wisdom, Prometheus's lack of wisdom is a special one: he is kind-hearted. He is easy to sway by the biddings of others. In Aeschylus's drama *Prometheus Bound*, he is presented in the same way. There the figure of Io, a woman, has the same effect on Prometheus as Epimetheus does here. Prometheus is too kind-hearted to be wise. It is not clear, however, whether Protagoras

means to present Prometheus himself as lacking in wisdom. In other words, it is possible that Prometheus's lack of wisdom resembles Protagoras's own lack of wisdom, that Protagoras tries to present Prometheus as a wise man, but he is wise in the sense that Protagoras is wise: not very wise, as we will see in the sequel. We can say [that] the myth as a whole shows that the cosmos is not the work of intelligence. Anaxagoras, the first sober man among intoxicated ones, as Aristotle puts it, was the first to say that the universe is a world of intelligence. Protagoras does not hold this . . . view.

Now there is another point. One could of course say that *logos*, speech, reason, is man's natural power, which would therefore have been given to him by Epimetheus. This one could say, but whether it is meant by Protagoras is another matter. The thesis here suggested is [that] nature is the stepmother of man, a thesis which we find somewhat later in a member of the Cynic school called Bion and in Epicurus,[ii] also somewhat later. And this is a thesis which was taken up by John Locke in modern times and by quite a few others. This is on the whole more characteristic of modern thought than of classical thought. But this only in passing. Now let us see the next step of the genesis of the world.

Mr. Reinken:
Now while he was in this perplexity, Prometheus came to inspect the distribution, and he found that the other animals were suitably furnished, but that man alone was naked and shoeless, and had neither bed nor arms of defense. The appointed hour was approaching when man in his turn was to go forth from the earth into the light of day. (321c)

LS: This implies that whatever Prometheus had done was still done underground, as I said before. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And Prometheus, not knowing how he could devise man's preservation, stole—

LS: "Steals." It is also present tense. In other words, this is truly an eternal process.

Mr. Reinken:
steals the wisdom of practicing the art of Hephaestus and Athene, and fire with it (it could neither have been acquired nor used without fire), and gave them to man. (321c-d)

LS: Also present tense. I will not state it all the time, I just warn you. But in the next sentence he turns again to the past tense.

Mr. Reinken:
Thus man had the wisdom necessary to the support of life, but political wisdom he had not, for that was in the keeping of Zeus. There was no longer any time for Prometheus to enter into the citadel of heaven where Zeus dwelt, who, moreover, had terrible sentinels. (321d)

[ii] Bion of Borysthenes (325–250 BCE); Epicurus (341–270 BCE).

LS: In other words, Prometheus was no longer in the good grace of Zeus, for reasons which Protagoras does not state. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
But he did enter by stealth into the common workshop of Athena and Hephaestus in which they used to practice their favorite arts, and carried off Hephaestus' art of working by fire, and also the art of Athena, and gave them to man. And in this way man was well supplied with the means of life. But Prometheus is said to have been afterwards prosecuted for theft, owing to the blunder of Epimetheus. (321e-322a)

LS: Let us stop here. So we have a new stage mythically designated by [4]the figure of Prometheus, the arts in contradistinction to nature. The arts are due not to the unnamed gods who mold men underground nor to the Olympian gods, but to Prometheus's action *against* the Olympian gods, and in particular again, the theft. [5]The expression "theft" is repeated. The fact of the theft, crime, is emphasized. In Hesiod, the old poet's story, Prometheus steals the fire from Zeus. Protagoras wishes to make clear the radical difference between the other arts and the political art or wisdom—with the latter only sent from Zeus, as we shall see from the sequel

This description which is here given of original man in c5 to 6, shoeless and so on and so on, naked, this is exactly the description given of Eros in Plato's *Banquet* 203c to d. This is not entirely irrelevant, as we can see, because if man's nature is *eros* in the widest sense of the term, meaning the desire for man's completion, for his perfection, if this is his nature, then in a way the arts and the laws belong to his nature, which would not be true in Protagoras's scheme.

Now the myth is meant to prove, let us never forget, that virtue can be taught. For this purpose, it must show what virtue is. Hitherto we have been given only one thing to understand. Virtue is not by nature, because what is by nature is the things which we owe to the gods or Epimetheus. Nor, as we learn now, is virtue an art like the other arts, because those we got through Prometheus's theft. But you see also, although it is clear that man is now to move out from underground into the light of the sun, nothing is said about the fact that man actually leaves the underground world. That is left to us to figure out whether that is the case. Now, yes?

Student: I don't understand why in this paragraph it seems to be repeated. First he says that Prometheus stole . . . the arts of Hephaestus and Athena, the arts together with fire. . . . And later on in the same paragraph, he says again that Prometheus steals the fiery arts and the art of Athena. Do these refer to the same thing?

LS: Well, he changes the order. First he says Athena and Hephaestus—no, I am sorry, in both cases he mentions Hephaestus first, that is quite true.

Student: Is he referring to the same act twice?

LS: Yes, I think so, which in itself means surely emphasis: that, that [LS taps on the table] from these two gods. In other words, it's a crime. You can easily figure that out: but for a crime, man would have been lost. You could not state the thesis of Machiavelli more simply than that. Man is compelled to commit crimes in order to live. That is implied. I mean, whether the crime is committed by man, by ordinary men, or by the being acting on men's behalf, namely, Prometheus, doesn't make any difference. Yes?

Student: What is the art of Athena that is referred to? Is that wisdom?

LS: Well, it could be weaving, the women's art. It could also be to some extent war. No, no, not war; it cannot be war in the context. You mustn't forget that Athena is also the goddess of war. But you could understand it as a higher art as distinguished from the more craftsmanlike art of Hephaestus: fire. Yes?

Student: In what Protagoras said, describing man in this myth and what was said about Eros in the *Banquet*, does this mean that in reading a dialogue of Plato in which Socrates is present always as a superior that we always have to check the inferior's words for Plato's teaching. Is that what—

LS: Well, according to the now-prevailing view, what I suggest is plainly absurd because they know by a sort of divine revelation that the *Banquet* was written much later than the *Protagoras*, and therefore there was not yet the thought of it here. But on the other hand, who knows what was in Plato's mind, assuming that we knew the dates? He surely knew when he wrote the *Symposium*, the *Banquet*, where many of the same characters occur, remember—he knew what he had written in the *Protagoras* and he could have made retroactively slight changes in the *Protagoras*, and maybe to the *Banquet*. We simply have to start from the assumption that Plato was as conscious in writing and deliberate as possible.

Student: So we have to check Protagoras's words against Plato's teaching as well as Socrates's words in this dialogue, in other words.

LS: Yes, sure, to begin with. [6]If we are quite strict we can of course never ascribe Socrates's teaching, let alone Protagoras's teaching, to Plato.[iii] I expressed it somewhere in an extreme way but I hope a helpful way, by saying that if someone would say that Macbeth is saying "Life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing"[iv]—if someone should say that this is also Shakespeare's opinion, everyone would laugh at him. But if he would quote something nice and pleasant from a Shakespearean character, he would say: Yes, that's Shakespeare. Now this is of course a childish principle, to say that the nice things are the author's view and the unnice things are the view of the scoundrels like Macbeth. Now to begin with, we must apply that to Plato as well,[7] especially since he knows so well that Socrates has been an ironical man; therefore if he says something very nice, he might not have meant it; and if he says

[iii] Strauss says "Socrates," presumably a misstatement.
[iv] Mr. Reinken helps Strauss to recall the quotation. See *The City and Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 50–59.

something very unnice, he might not have meant it. So we have to use our heads all the time, which is bad, I admit that. [Laughter] But it also has its advantages: it keeps us on our toes, as they say. Yes?

Student: But actually, it is not Socrates: it's Plato. And Socrates is Plato's mask, so is everybody else in the dialogue—

LS: Yes, but how do we know that it is Plato's mask?

Student: Because Plato created it, just as he created Protagoras and every other—

LS: Yes, all right; then they all are Plato's mask, even the scoundrels.

Student: Okay, then you have to look at it in terms of the dramatic organization and not in terms of superman versus nobody-man.

LS: Yes, sure.

Student: . . .

LS: But the point is this: if Plato were to say that he is a hero, that he is superior to others, we could rightly say that it doesn't interest us if he says so. He may be wrong. But if Socrates proves to be superior—Protagoras was an outstanding man, you must never forget that; the greatest names of today would barely be comparable to Protagoras in his time. You know? A very outstanding personality. But if Socrates, who *proves* to be, before our eyes, able to confuse, to lick Protagoras, then we see with our own eyes that this Platonic character called Socrates is superior to the other Platonic character called Protagoras. But we see them with our own eyes and we don't know—Plato never says that Socrates is superior to Protagoras, at least not in the dialogue. But if we see them, we must not be unreasonably skeptical.[8] I mean, if I see that you have a blond-reddish beard [and] if someone comes and tells me all kinds of things about the deceptions of the senses, it would not for one moment make me doubt that you do have such a beard; and I believe [that] if I had any doubt I would ask Mr. Walker to look at this student whether he has a blond beard as I believe he has or—

Student: But if you only looked at that, you might go around identifying people only on the basis of that, and that would be dangerous.

LS: No, but the point—

Student: But Socrates involves himself in a good deal of illogic. He is accused constantly and quite justly of pushing people around and manipulating them in the verbal art of his [laughter] . . . merely verbal and not actual.

LS: Yes, sure, all right. But if these other people claim to be the best sophists in the world and Socrates out-sophists them, then they are licked. That doesn't mean that it is

nice to be a sophist, God forbid [laughter], but it means only that Socrates could in a pinch take care of them. And this may have some advantage, because then we would say: Well, if we have to go in for sophistry at all, we prefer Socrates. And then we look [to see] whether he doesn't have something maybe which is better than sophistry.

Student: Okay . . .

LS: We must be very flexible. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: May I defend Plato's irony briefly? People keep noting that the level of argument seems to be below the level on which we believe to move, but this is in the proper tradition of comedy in the ancient world, where serious situations are represented by absurd, easily-penetrated exaggerations. Think of Plautus, or even Aristophanes.

LS: Yes, sure. But still, the point is this: the Platonic dialogues are not in this simple sense comedies, and therefore this is not immediately of any help to us. But on the contrary, I would say, in the case of the comedies we are too much inclined not to take them seriously enough and simply say: Well, these are slapstick scenes which are very amusing; and maybe they are more than slapstick. In a tragedy, you would take them more seriously because death and guilt and all other such things are involved, and then we are much more respectful than we would be in the case of comedy, with all kinds of these disgraceful things which happen in comedy.

Now where were we; where did we wander off? That was not meant as a criticism of the question, but we have to return now to our text. We begin now in the last stage. Yes, please.

Mr. Reinken:
Now man, having a share in divinity— (322a)

LS: No, "having acquired a share in a divine portion," divine fate, meaning through Prometheus's theft.

Mr. Reinken:
Having acquired a share in the divine lot, was at first the only one of the animals who had any gods—

LS: Literally, "who believed in gods" or "came to hold gods" by virtue of his kinship with *the* god, in the singular now. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
because he was of the kindred of the god. And he would raise altars—

LS: "He would try, he would attempt."

Mr. Reinken:

And he would attempt to raise altars and images of them.

LS: Of gods. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
of gods. He was not long in inventing articulate speech and names; and he also constructed houses and clothes and shoes and beds, and drew sustenance from the earth. (322a)

LS: Now let us stop here. Through Prometheus's crime, man came to share in the divine portion, meaning the portion, I take it, belonging to Hephaestus and Athena, having these arts. But before that, he alone of all animals had already kinship with the god. With which god and on the basis of what did he have the kinship? I would suggest, without being able to prove it, [that] he had this kinship on the basis of his *logos*, of his reasoning. Protagoras indirectly reminds us of the absence from his story of an intelligent maker of the universe. Now he smuggles that intelligent author in here . . . The rational animal, man, believes in a rational god and is *qua* rational a kindred. You see that worship of the gods precedes speech. But not quite. Therefore he says he *tried* to set up altars; [9]he couldn't do it properly because he lacked speech and reason.

Now piety, we see then, comes in as a virtue here; it is the first virtue proper, we can say, which is mentioned. And it is a prepolitical virtue, but it presupposes art, fundamentally because according to this view the gods are by virtue of an art. The *Laws* 889e3; also the beginning of the simile of the cave in the *Republic*. But let us go on. So now we see—you have a question?

Student: Are you suggesting that man had an original kinship with god based on his speech, or was his speech based on the theft of Prometheus?

LS: Well, [10]the fact that he uses here "the god" in the singular means that he cannot have meant the subterraneously working gods who molded man, nor can he refer directly to the Olympian gods. At least there is no link, explicit link between those gods and himself. Why not such a rational cause like Anaxagoras's intelligence with a capital I. Yes?

Mr. Shulsky: Well, because before the theft of Prometheus, which gave him the arts of Hephaestus and Athena, he didn't have speech either; and so it would seem that he had absolutely no divine component until the theft . . . enabled him to speak and be identified.

LS: Yes, but is there not something underlying speech and the arts, the condition for the fact that man *can* acquire arts and can acquire speech? Could this not be? After all, the fact of man's natural nakedness in the radical sense in which Protagoras means it, is this not at the same time also as it were—there is an emptiness, a hole there which is the place for reason. In this sense man is potentially rational from the very beginning, even according to that scheme. Yes?

Mr. Shulsky: Well, one gets the impression from the beginning of the myth, though, that all of these creatures were created as sort of blanks and then given various powers, and man's power just happened to be quite accidentally these arts, simply because none of the other—

LS: No. They are distinct. The arts are distinct; they are a gift of Prometheus and they are distinguished from what they got before. And the others have definite natural powers. Man's powers are in a sense all acquired, but there must be something by virtue of which man *can* acquire them; this potentiality must be there which the others don't have. Man cannot be simply naked because even if—or this nakedness is a very peculiar nakedness. It is rich in potentiality.

Mr. Shulsky: Well, it seems the only difficulty would be that this assumes that before any of the qualities or any of the natures were given to the animals by Epimetheus, there was already in the very beginning, in the first creation of living matter by the unnamed gods, there was a distinction between man and the animals, and that would seem to go against—

LS: Yes, sure, it was because the others, let us say the other animals are living matter plus, say, instinct. Yes? . . . And then there was a piece of living matter without instinct, and that is man. But the mere fact of the absence of instinct as a purely negative thing is also something positive, because it is the basis for the emergence of reason taking the place of instinct. Naturally we have to speculate here a bit because of the extreme brevity of Protagoras's statement, and he is not particularly concerned with that because he is concerned with making a distinction between nature, art, and something else to which he is turning now. Yes?

Mr. Shulsky: Well, the basis of the very distinction, though, it would seem that everything that is rational about man simply came from these arts and wasn't part of nature in the first place.

LS: Yes, but that he was receptive to the arts in a way in which, say, an elephant would not be receptive, or any other animal.

Mr. Shulsky: But you don't mean that if Epimetheus had forgotten the elephants—

LS: But the question is, I only ask you: What is the kinship of man with *the* god and who is that god? This question must be answered. I do not say that I have solved it, but show me another solution.

Mr. Shulsky: Well, simply that he had the arts, and that—

LS: No, he had spoken that he had acquired a divine portion, and that is what happened through Prometheus. But what about this kinship, the kinship with the god? That is not necessarily identical with having acquired the divine portion. You would have to give a better answer than that.

Student: Is it fair to say on the basis of this discussion that the origin of this *logos* is not covered in Protagoras's myth?

LS: No, no, *logos,* you can say, is divided into the arts on the one hand, language on the other, and something like law in the third place. Yes? But it is implied as a unity only in what we find in man as he came from the hands of Epimetheus.

Student: But since Epimetheus did not give man anything, it must mean that that receptivity came from the gods who created living matter.

LS: No, the gods gave nothing. They produced only the indifferent living matter of all being. But myth, after all, can never be a hundred percent correct. But there can be a kind of . . . according to which the absence of any natural faculties, this nakedness means there is a hole—an h-o-l-e, I mean. But being a hole, it can be filled, and it calls as it were for being filled, and acquires . . . Mr. Bruell?

Mr. Bruell: The other animals were clothed all over.

LS: Yes, sure, you are quite correct to remind me of it. That was the reason why it occurred to me [LS chuckles] that man might be understood after all as a rational being. And if man is a rational being, the sole rational animal, then of course his kinship with *the* god would consist in the fact that this single god is the intelligence. Yes, good. Thank you very much. Now let us go on where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
Thus provided, mankind at first lived dispersed, and there were no cities. But the consequence was that they were destroyed by the wild beasts, for they were utterly weak in comparison to them, and their arts and crafts were only sufficient to provide them with the means of life— (322a-b)

LS: Literally, "their craftsmanly arts." I mean, in other words the arts which they got through Prometheus. The craftsman's arts, we can say. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
the craftsmanly arts were only sufficient to provide them with the means of life, and did not enable them to carry on war against the brutes. Food they had, but not as yet the political art,[v] of which the art of war is a part.

LS: You see they couldn't wage war because they didn't have the art of war; and they didn't have the art of war because the art of war is a part of the political art, and they did not yet have the political art, living in isolation and not together. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

[v] In the translation: "the art of government"

After a while the desire for collective living and of self-preservation made them found cities; but when they were gathered together, having not the political art,[vi] they dealt unjustly with one another, and were again in process of dispersion and destruction. (322b-322c)

LS: Stop [here]. So man got the craftsmanly arts through Prometheus, but not the political *technē*, the political art; that is essentially different from the other arts. Hence they could not live together; hence they could not live. Because man . . . Man's beginnings are, we see, very imperfect according to Protagoras. You remember perhaps Protagoras's critique of the wisdom of the ancients. You know he is superior to Homer, Hesiod, and the others, as we have seen before. The whole notion of progress is here somehow in the background. So men need the political art, and they didn't get it from nature nor from Prometheus. How did they get it? Let us see.

Mr. Reinken:
Zeus feared that our entire race would be exterminated—

LS: You see, Zeus enters here only very late, after the gods underground and Epimetheus had done their work, and now he is trying to save the situation. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and so he sent Hermes to mankind, bearing reverence and justice to be the ordering principles of cities and the uniting bonds of friendship. (322c)

LS: Yes. Now Hermes, the god of the thieves, of course, who reminds us of Prometheus's theft [11](you remember also that Alcibiades was Hermes-like in this dialogue), but he is also the god emphatically of the Athenian democracy. He is to bring the sense of shame and right. And it is clear already now [that] the political art is a divine gift from Zeus himself. It is not stolen. There is no connection here between Zeus here and that god to whom we are akin, of whom you read before. Mr. Frankel?

Mr. Frankel: . . . Why do they have this collective desire?

LS: Which desire? Well, because the wild animals threaten them and they have to be confronted with a tiger; they think: Maybe if we unite we have a greater chance of survival. I think that is the most obvious explanation here. And then they couldn't do it because they had to have the capacity of getting along with each other, which they lacked. They are not yet socialized in the sense of present-day political sociology. That had to be done by Zeus. Yes?

Student: It must be a truism that man is a social animal.

LS: Pardon?

Student: It must have been a truism anyway that man is a social animal.

[vi] In the translation: "having no art of government"

LS: Well, you take it very easy, because this truth was denied, surely, by such people as Hobbes and Rousseau and so on.

Student: But they didn't live in Athens.

LS: Yes, but do you believe that these matters depend entirely on climate and—here [Protagoras] clearly says[12] that man is not by nature a social animal, and not even through the invention of the arts does he become social. This is something very special. By the way, the other statements of people, like Glaucon in the second book of the *Republic* and Callicles in the *Gorgias* also imply that man is not by nature social. Man's sociality is due to convention. That was a view ordinarily ascribed to the sophists and in particular—

Student: . . . But the question is, it says at least in the English "the desire of collective living *and* of self-preservation."

LS: Now let me see, "they sought to come together, to assemble themselves and to save themselves by founding cities." But the reason is clear. [13]Entering society for very powerful motives is something radically different from fundamental sociality. In other words, that society is within us whether we wish it or whether we have good or bad motives for living in society or for living in isolation, in solitude. That man is by nature social means he is under all conditions a social animal, whether he lives in solitude or he lives at Times Square at twelve noon. Yes?

Student: Is this to be taken then that the desire is given to man as a part of his . . .

LS: No, "desire" is not—"they sought." "Sought." It is more literal.

Student: . . .

LS: Yes, but that is in no way developed. This seeking is a consequence of the threat by wild animals.

Student: But it is different from the animals, who feel no such threat to . . .

LS: Well, that depends. Some of them do live gregariously, as you know: bees, and ants, wolves . . . and quite a few birds are by nature social.

Student: As far as we can tell, they did so from the beginning, they are made that way by men . . .

LS: But the point is that man was *not* made that way. In the case of man, it was necessary to invent society, to found cities. That is the point. Good. Where were we now?

Mr. Reinken: 322c, at about 4. Hermes asks Zeus.

LS: Yes, good. Now let us go on from here.

Mr. Reinken:
Hermes asked Zeus how he should impart justice and reverence among men.

LS: "Reverence." Well, you can also translate it "sense of shame." "Sense of shame" I believe is better. Now what was the other?

Mr. Reinken:
justice and a sense of shame among men: "Shall I distribute them as the arts are distributed; that is to say, to a few only—"

LS: No, no. It must be . . . "as the arts are distributed. They are distributed in the following manner." Namely . . . Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
"And they are distributed in the following manner, one specialist in the art of medicine or in any other art being sufficient for a large number of laymen? Shall this be the manner in which I am to distribute justice and the sense of shame among men, or shall I give them to all?" (322c)

LS: Now let's see. In other words, it might be sufficient to have, say, five or six experts in justice around, and the others are all unjust and they would take care of the others. You see that Hermes implies that Zeus has no idea of how the arts are distributed, and therefore he explains it to him. It is also a little . . . Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
"To all," said Zeus; "I should like them all to—"

LS: Yes. But you have not tried to imitate the jovial Olympian character in which Zeus tries to thunder from on high. [Laughter] I don't blame you for that, but we must think of that. It must have a terrific effect when he says: "All, and all should participate!" Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
"To all," said Zeus [laughter],[vii] "I should like them all to have a share; for cities cannot exist if a few only share in justice and a sense of shame,[viii] as in the arts. And further—" (322d)

LS: "As in the case of the other arts." In other words, only a few have to be tailors and shoemakers and so on, but all must be decent.

Mr. Reinken:

[vii] Mr. Reinken reads in a distinctly non-jovial Olympian manner.
[viii] In the translation: "justice and reverence"

"And further, make a law by my order that he who has no part in a sense of shame[ix] and justice shall be put to death, for he is a plague of the city."[x]

And this is the reason, Socrates, why the Athenians and mankind in general, when the question relates to excellence in carpentry or any other mechanical art— (322d)

LS: "Any other craftsmanly art," as . . .

Mr. Reinken:
of the craftsmanly art, allow but a few to share in their deliberations. And when any one else interferes, then, as you say, they object if he be not of the few; which, as I reply, is very natural. But when they meet to deliberate about political excellence or virtue, which proceeds only by way of justice and self-control, they are patient enough of any man who speaks of them, as is also natural, because they think that every man ought to share in this sort of virtue, and that cities[xi] could not exist if this were otherwise. I have explained to you, Socrates, the reason of this phenomenon. (322d-323a)

LS: Now let us stop here. You see that he comes toward the end of the myth [and] twice he has addressed Socrates and has fallen out of the solemn style of mythical delivery. And "natural" of course is here used in the loose sense. In the Greek, [it is] "as a matter of course" or "plausible."

Now you see that Protagoras has vindicated the Athenian practice as reasonable. But he does not say, as Socrates did, that the Athenians are particularly wise in having that practice. He says all men do that. So he is not very prudent; he would have had the simple opportunity of paying a compliment to his guest. He doesn't avail himself of it. And he—that is the key point—in contradistinction to Socrates gives the cause of the Athenian practice. Now what is the cause? What is the cause why the Athenians, and in fact all men, demand from every man that he be just and have a sense of shame? What's the cause of that?

Mr. Reinken: If he doesn't, the city falls apart.

LS: Yes, in one sense, but more literally?

Student: It is a law.

LS: Yes, the law. Generally speaking, this is due to law.[14]

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[1] Deleted "explained or rather"
[2] Deleted "which."
[3] Deleted "It means that"
[4] Deleted "the work"
[5] Deleted "the word"

[ix] In the translation: "reverence"
[x] In the translation: "state"
[xi] In the translation: "states"

[6] Deleted “I mean.”
[7] Deleted “and.”
[8] Deleted “you know? I mean”
[9] Deleted “you know”
[10] Deleted “I mean, that”
[11] Deleted “enters at the same time—”
[12] Moved “Protagoras.”
[13] Deleted “I mean”
[14] Deleted “Will you excuse me for one moment. I do not feel right. Mr. Reinken, will you bring me to my office.”

Session 8: April 21, 1965

The Long Speech of Protagoras: *Mythos* and *Logos*

(322d-325b)

Leo Strauss: [1]Let us turn after this long interruption to the *Protagoras*. Let us only remind ourselves of the context. Protagoras claims to teach well-advisedness regarding domestic and political matters. Socrates calls it the political art. But Socrates doubts that it can be taught. Protagoras chooses of his own free will to prove his contention that it can be taught by a myth.

The myth has externally four stages. First, the gods beneath the earth produce something which we called living matter, with a highly inappropriate but colloquially intelligible expression. Second, Epimetheus, working also beneath the earth—which means without light and blindly—supplies that matter with specific faculties or natures, i.e., he makes the various races of animals but in such a way that man remains unsupplied with such natural powers. The implication is that nature is a stepmother to man or, generalized, nature is bad. Art remedies the defects of nature. There are allusions to this sort [of thing], which is of course very common to us in modern times—conquest of nature, nature the enemy—but there are some traces of that in classical thought. I referred on a former occasion to a remark in the first book of the *Republic* to this effect. Now the third stage: Prometheus steals the arts from Hephaestus and Athena. He steals them. The Olympian gods to whom these two gods belong are as unkind or malicious as the subterraneous gods, to say nothing of Epimetheus. But the fourth stage: even after having acquired the arts, men are still unable to live since they are unable to live together. They lack the political art, which is identified here by Prometheus with sense of shame and sense of right. This is not stolen from any god, because it would be absurd to present a sense of right as due to a crime, but [it is] a gift of Zeus. Now the implication here is clear. There is as fundamental a difference between nature and *technē*, art, as is the difference between art and morality, to use a convenient modern term, what the Greeks would call the noble and just things. This much we have read last time. I have to ask Mr. Reinken to reread the last passage where I interrupted in 322d5. That is after this conversation with Zeus, between Zeus and Hermes.

Mr. Reinken: When he addresses Socrates.

LS: Yes, that is important. Now for the first time he addresses Socrates. It is of course not proper to the style of a myth that you should use the name of a contemporary man. I mean, a myth belongs to the olden days and Socrates lives now, in 431 or so, 432. Good.

Mr. Reinken:

[Protag.:] And this is the reason, Socrates, why the Athenians, and mankind in general, when the question relates to excellence in carpentry or any other craftsmanly[i] art, allow but a few to share in their deliberations. And when any one else interferes, then, as you say, they object, if he be not—

LS: "If anyone outside of these few," the few experts. In every such question, there is a small minority which is capable to give advice. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
They object if he be not of the few; which, as I reply, is very natural. But when they meet to deliberate about political excellence or virtue, which proceeds only by way of justice and self-control, they are patient enough of any man who speaks of them, as a matter of course,[ii] because they think that every man ought to share in this sort of virtue, and that cities[iii] could not exist if this were otherwise. I have explained to you, Socrates, the reason of this phenomenon. (322e-323a)

LS: Literally, "the cause." This, Socrates, is the cause of that. He again addresses Socrates directly. Now Protagoras vindicates the Athenian practice as reasonable, but he does not say, as Socrates did, that the Athenians are particularly wise. Protagoras doesn't make any compliments to the Athenians; he is not prudent. He says that this practice is common to all men. And [2]in contradistinction to Socrates, who simply stated the brute fact, Protagoras gives the cause, the reason for the practice. And the reason is, as we have already seen last time, in the first place Zeus's law. Everyone should partake in it. But ultimately (as also was said in the discussion last time) behind that law of Zeus is a necessity: there couldn't be human survival without cities, and there couldn't be cities without political virtue.

Protagoras replaces what Zeus had called the sense of shame by moderation. There is a certain kinship between the two things, as you can easily see. If you want to go deeper into that, you must study the first two books of Plato's *Laws*, where this connection is explained. And he replaces *dikē*, which I translated by right or sense of right, but which also has the meaning of punishment: for example, in 322a2 he speaks of the punishment which Prometheus received for his theft, using here the word *dik*ē. He replaces *dikē* by *dikaiosunē*, by the ordinary word for justice. In connection with this he mentions no punishment except annihilation: those who cannot partake of political virtue must be annihilated. Those who are unable: *mē dunamenoi*. The term occurs at the beginning of Aristotle's *Politics* when he speaks of the men who are unable to live in the *polis*, 1253a25 and following. But most important is here the simple identification of the political art with political virtue, which to begin with is absolutely strange. To demand from every citizen high-class statesmanship is plain nonsense, but from everyone one can expect that he has the simple citizen virtues. But here the political art is as much to be demanded of all men as the other. We can only later on find out what this means.

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[i] In the translation: "mechanical"
[ii] In the translation: "as is also natural"
[iii] In the translation: "states"

He speaks also here of the craftsmanly virtue, not of the craftsmanly art. Here too virtue and knowledge are identified, and this is now not by Socrates but by Protagoras. So the identification of knowledge and virtue for which Socrates is so famous is here attributed to Protagoras. A similar case, not so clear, occurs in the *Gorgias*, 460b, where Gorgias accepts without any further ado the assertion of Socrates that he who knows the just things does the just things. That's the same. This is of course not an unfair attribution to these sophists or rhetoricians by Socrates; it is implied in Protagoras's claim: Hippocrates will become better and better by virtue of Protagoras's teaching. That means [that] just by listening to Protagoras, by learning, by acquiring knowledge he will become better. He will learn well-advisedness or what Socrates calls the political art.

Virtue is a piece of learning, a *mathēma*, something that can be brought about by speeches, in particular by persuasive speeches. In other words, the political art is identical with rhetoric, which is described as the thesis of the sophists by Aristotle toward the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. I have dealt with this, but I deliberately do not wish to bring it up now; but for those who are interested, in the *City and Man* on page 23. If you read this page once or twice you will see how crucial that issue is. So the conclusion which I drew there is this—no, which I did not draw there: that Socrates, in contradistinction to the sophists, seems to agree with that, that virtue is knowledge, but according to Socrates it is not rhetoric but dialectics which is or is productive of virtue. And therefore of course we would have to know much more than we do now [about] how dialectics can make a man good.

But let us return to the context. The myth was to dispose of the conflict between Protagoras's claim, the famous foreigner, and the view of the Athenians. The Athenians have of course no objection to men acquiring virtue, especially in the sense of justice and moderation through teachers or any other men, but they do object to a tiny minority among them acquiring the political art of statesmanship. That is to say, the Athenians do make a distinction between the political art and the political virtue, the virtue by which the city stands and falls, or, to use a later term, they do make a distinction between the political art and moral virtue, of which justice and moderation are key parts. Protagoras abolishes this distinction. The political art is identical with justice and moderation. Perhaps even more important is this: that according to the myth, the political art in the sense of justice and moderation is a gift of Zeus. What does this imply, if it is a gift of Zeus?

Mr. Reinken: It is very good.

LS: Very good. Now everyone would admit, everyone in his senses would admit that justice and moderation are good. But there is another non-trivial indication. If it is a gift of Zeus—

Mr. Reinken: It cannot be taught.

LS: Yes. It doesn't have to be taught. So this leaves our good Protagoras on a limb. The myth is inept. But why did he tell a myth? Because he wanted to tell a myth. His choice

was inept. He lacks that quality of well-advisedness which he claims to teach. We have to return to this point later when we are through, when we have considered the sequel. Yes?

Student: I was just wondering: Still couldn't he claim that the high priests or a man who has served the message of the gods better than others, because—

LS: But if it is a gift of Zeus, if everyone coming to him has it already, what can he do? Yes? I believe the sequel confirms this interpretation, but I would like to make here a few remarks which I believe are necessary about the myth in Plato in general, because that is a very broad topic and we must be mindful of that. Now originally the terms *mythos* and *logos* had the same meaning: a speech. But the distinction and even the opposition between them antedates Plato. And according to this more recent usage, a myth is an untrue story. For example, in *Republic* 377a, or in the *Phaedo*, Socrates says [that] poets must make myths but not *logoi*, and the poets are by definition liars, makers of things which are not. The question is, of course: Why does Plato use myth? Or in other words: What is a Platonic myth, which is not the same as any other myth? Now to answer this question, of course the only decent way to proceed is to go through the writings of Plato with a pencil in one's hand and see: here is a myth, there's a myth. And one should perhaps say to begin with, for someone who wants to be very conscientious, that only the statements which are *called* mythical by Plato or his spokesman—here we are already on treacherous ground, you see—are to be counted as mythical.

If we [were to] apply this standard we would arrive at the conclusion that the myth at the end of the *Gorgias* is not a myth, because Socrates explicitly says: You, Callicles, will think it is a myth, but it is a *logos*, in fact. The presentation of the best regime in the *Republic* is explicitly called a myth. You see how far this would lead us. Let us therefore not be too strict or pedantic—or in a way, too unpedantic, because [3]we must not identify the so-called spokesman with Plato without great caution. Let me say that the myth is an account which lacks evidence, *saphēneia* in Greek, and which nevertheless claims to make manifest what is. Myth will therefore deal with things regarding which knowledge is impossible or at least very difficult to obtain. Now what are such things? For example, the things of the most ancient antiquity: they are always unknowable, even today, because whatever finds the anthropologists and paleontologists may make, [4]you come back finally to a period where you have only bones and no tools. And what was going on in this very interesting stage where there were no tools and yet human beings of a sort, this of course is wholly unknowable; it can never be known. So the very old things, for example in the *Laws*, in the *Critias*, in the *Statesman*, things of very old times are told explicitly as myth.

But there are other things which are unknowable: the interior of heaven, for example. Well, we know much more today than Plato did, but even today no one has been there, after all, even on the moon,[iv] to say nothing of other planetary systems. And also the interior of the earth was at that time regarded as unknowable. Therefore cosmology, an account of heaven and earth, can become an ingredient of myth, as in the *Phaedo* and the myth of the tenth book of the *Republic*. To some extent Plato's own great cosmological

[iv] The first moon landing of course occurred about four years after Strauss spoke, in 1969.

work, the *Timaeus*, is a myth. It is explicitly called a plausible myth,[v] so it is distinguished from the other ones which are not plausible, but it is still a myth.

But above all, among these things which are not easy of access is the soul and especially its fate prior to birth and after death. The myths in the *Apology*, in the *Gorgias*, in the *Republic*, in the *Phaedo*, and in the *Phaedrus* deal with these things. On the other hand, as a curiosity, Diotima's account of the ancestry of Eros is not called by her a myth. In the present-day discussions this account is always taken . . . but she does not call it a myth. Why? That is a long question. Now myth, however, need not be necessary [only] because the truth cannot be strictly speaking known: myth may also be necessary because the truth cannot be said. That is a possibility.

Now let us cast a glance at the myths told by Socrates, to simplify matters. In the *Gorgias* Socrates introduces[5] what everyone calls a myth except Socrates: that he has heard an account, and on the basis of what he has heard he figured out certain things; he drew certain inferences from what he has heard. This is probably the reason why he says it is not a myth but a *logos*, because on the basis of this account he has figured [things] out.

In the *Apology* of Socrates, Socrates tells a myth on the basis of what people say. This applies also to the myth in the *Phaedo*. In the tenth book of the *Republic*, the myth is told by Socrates but ascribed by him to Er, the Armenian,[vi] so it is in a way not Socrates's story. In the *Critias*, the story is told by old Egyptian priests; in the *Phaedrus* it is ascribed to the poet Stesichorus.

Now we get one understanding of the *Protagoras* at once. You see the point in this? We must, just as in military strategy as it has been said, "hit them where they ain't." It is in our kind of strategy also necessary to see what isn't, what ain't there, i.e., what is not said. Now if you compare the Protagoras myth with the others you see immediately that Protagoras does not refer to anything said, to any tradition, to anything that has come down. He does not even claim to be based on tradition; it is a mere invention. There is only one slight exception, in 322a when he speaks of the punishment of Prometheus. He says "as is said," but this is of course not a very important part of the story. On the contrary, this singular reference to what is said brings out the silence on what is said in all other matters.There is a parallel to this, another story by a sophist, Prodicus, in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, book 2, chapter 1, the famous fable of Heracles at the parting of the ways: Should he take the way of virtue, or [of] vice? Also no reference to any tradition. The open invention of the myth seems to be characteristic of these men as distinguished from Socrates.

Another characteristic of the *Protagoras* myth is this: if you would compare it with the other myths, you would see that the other myths are always preceded by a *logos*, by a reasoned argument. Here Protagoras begins with a myth, without any preparation. And lastly, but above all, it is extremely simple to translate Protagoras's myth as a whole into

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[v] See, e.g., *Timaeus* 29d.

[vi] Er is identified in the *Republic* as "son of Armenius, by race a Paphylian" (614b3–4). (Strauss spells his name for the students.)

non-mythical language. I believe I gave you a specimen of that. One can say it is as little mysterious as Voltaire's *Candide*, if you ever read that. *Candide* also has its mysteries, but they are not very difficult to find. You have to have some information, historical information; for example, there was a kind of bookseller—no, I'm sorry, this fellow who said—what was his name? The wise man.

Student: Kant.

LS: No, Kant was not wise. Kant was the German metaphysician, and that is by definition unwise [laughter], at least for Voltaire. No, this other fellow who slaved all his life for the booksellers in Amsterdam. [6]Pierre Bayle, Pierre Bayle.[vii]

So you have to have some minor outside information, which is very easy to get, but there are no real mysteries. I will then say that a Socratic myth, in contradistinction to the Protagorean myth, is an account which one tells first of all to children, which only children will accept as literally true—which, however, is not simply an invention or innovation but already being hallowed, believed in, or which has come down from a named or an unnamed source. An account, in other words, which is not literally true and supported by a tradition which is more or less shaky, but it is supported by a tradition. The question arises: What then is the myth's solid support if it is not literally true and if the tradition is rather dubious? I will here give only one provisional answer. Let us consider another kind of untrue account occurring in Plato which is not called a myth (and which no one ever called a myth, as far as I know), and this is a description of democracy in the eighth book of the *Republic*. This is an extremist attack on democracy which manifestly runs counter to facts known to both Socrates and Plato. I mention only one point: in democracy no one will ever be punished, let alone heavily punished; people who have been condemned to death walk around and nothing happens to them. Well, Plato knew the case of Socrates. And Socrates knew some other cases; for example, the terror in 413 to 415,[viii] or the story of—

Mr. Reinken: The Arginusae generals.[ix]

LS: Yes, that was a bit later. Arginusae you can also take, but the many political trials where the condemned people were of course put to death without any hesitation. Now

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[vii] Pierre Bayle (1647–1706), French philosopher and historian, author of *Various Thoughts on the Occasion of a Comet* (1683) and *The Historical and Criticial Dictionary* (1697).

[viii] On the eve of the Sicilian Expedition (415–413), a number of prominent Athenians, including the general Alcibiades, were accused of mutilating statues of Hermes and of profaning the Mysteries, which led to a sort of witch hunt in the city to punish anyone allegedly involved in what were taken to be bad omens before so momentous an undertaking. Alcibiades was tried in absentia.

[ix] Arginusae generals: the commanders of the Athenian navy who, near the end of the Peloponnesian War, in 406, commanded the Athenian victory over the Spartans in the largest naval battle of the war. They failed, however, to rescue the crew of twenty-five Athenian ships which had become disabled during the battle, and many drowned. All eight generals were removed from their positions; two went into exile and the six who returned to Athens were tried as a group and executed.

this description, this atrociously untrue description corresponds, however, to Adeimantus's dream. Adeimantus is a man to whom Socrates talks when he describes some of these things in 563b of the *Republic*. Now for some reason Socrates thinks it opportune in this situation to play up to Adeimantus's very strong antidemocratic prejudices, and he tests him in a way by seeing that he [7]swallows this hook, line, and sinker. Now if we generalize from that, regarding myth we could say Platonic myths are, to some extent at any rate, dreams in which a soul reveals itself: a mirror of a soul, the desire or *eros* of a soul. And then a Socratic myth would be[8] a story by which Socrates reveals to his addressee the innermost longings of the addressee, or perhaps of Socrates himself.

Perhaps the myth in the *Phaedrus*, which is distinguished from all other myths by the fact that it is the only myth in which Socrates speaks of a superheavenly place. All the other myths deal with subterraneous or earthly things, or heavenly things, but none deals with superheavenly things. Perhaps the myth in the *Phaedrus* is the one in which Socrates reveals his innermost longing to Phaedrus, his longing for unqualified beauty free from everything ugly or bad. And incidentally, regarding the myth at the end of the *Gorgias*, I would say [that] this myth is meant to cure Callicles, in a way to hold [to] him a mirror of his soul. But in this case of course Socrates proves to be wholly ineffectual.

Now this is what I wanted to say about the myths for you to keep this in mind, and perhaps it will prove to be helpful to you when you come across another myth. Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken: About that myth that failed, does it hold a mirror to Callicles of his soul as it is, or of his soul as Socrates feels it could be and should be?

LS: Or as he should view it, perhaps, as Callicles should view the future of his soul, namely, in hell, where he is completely naked and where there are no longer any trimmings there, you know, badges or any other things derived from wealth or honor, and where he is looked at or judged by judges who cannot be fooled. Whereas if he is accused before an Athenian jury, if he has a very clever defender or maybe if he himself has acquired the art of forensic rhetoric, then he can of course fool the judges easily. But if he is down and confronted with unfoolable judges, if one can say so, and in addition there is no way he doesn't appear as this marvelous striking man, but simply naked, completely naked, then he will see the truth. Good. Mr. Plummer?

Mr. Plummer: Your account of a myth is that in the first place, it is something that is not literally true. What is the connection between your account and the fact that myths told by Socrates usually have some basis in some things that are held by people . . .

LS: Yes, but Protagoras doesn't refer to anything—well, he makes some tacit use of stories about Prometheus, but he doesn't deem it in any way necessary to have his support by authority.

Mr. Plummer: Well, what significance do you attach to the fact that Socrates, in contradistinction to the sophists, does feel the need to appeal to these commonly held views.

LS: Well, Socrates is more modest. He doesn't have the nerve. And you see, it fits of course perfectly into the picture of Protagoras's contempt for antiquity, of which we have seen some traces. We will find some more.

Mr. Shulsky: Well, it would also have to do with the fact that Socrates recognizes that to be convincing a myth has to seem to be something that is eternally true and an old story and so forth, whereas Protagoras doesn't realize what is important in terms of convincing somebody. He just makes one up to—

LS: No, no. But how come? Because he is sure [9]that he can charm everybody, and people will not ask for any proofs if he has said so in his beautifully phrased and intonated sentences. Now let us continue at this point.

Mr. Reinken:
And that you may not suppose yourself to be deceived— (323a)

LS: Now let us stop here. He refers here to the danger of deception. By what? By the myth, of course. The mythical ground or cause which he has given does not give a guarantee that it has an effect which is real, as we say, which is being, as you could say. The myth is an account of the origins, as we have seen: where does virtue come from, where do the arts come from, and so on. Well think from the Bible of the explanation of the peculiar relation of the two sexes by the story of Eve cleaved from Adam's rib. The fact which we know is that there is a certain relation between the two sexes. They need each other, they cling to each other, and there is a certain inferiority of the female sex. I am not stating my own opinion. [Laughter] And a way of expressing it is that Eve came after Adam. But a myth may also be an account of origins of things which are not. For example, there may be a myth about the origin of centaurs; the centaurs are not, and therefore the origins of the centaurs are not. Yes? Surely the visible effects are better known than the mythical causes. But apart from this essential defect of myth as myth, this particular myth has this special defect: that it renders impossible Protagoras's art, as we have seen. If the political art [is] equal to political virtue as a gift of Zeus, why do we need human teachers? So again, as I said, Protagoras's choice of the myth was a bad choice, and therefore he must now not leave it at the myth but supplement the myth, which he does quite cleverly; but this cleverness must not conceal from us the fact that it is only a remedy for a primary ineptness. Now let us begin the sentence again and read it.

Mr. Reinken:
And that you may not suppose yourself to be deceived in thinking that all men actually do regard every man as having a share of justice and of every other political virtue, let me give you a further proof, which is this. (323a)

LS: Yes. What is the point? What is the fact of which the myth has given the cause? All human beings believe that every *hombre* must partake of justice and the other political virtues. Protagoras does not say that in fact every *hombre* is just or must be just, etc., still less that all human beings—women, slaves, etc.—must be just. So it is very little, what he demands, that men believe—and they may be absolutely mistaken, of course. But the fact that they *believe,* that is now established by Protagoras on non-mythical grounds because a myth somehow doesn't fill the bill. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
In other cases, as you are aware, if a man says—

LS: No, "in the case of the other virtues, as you say." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
In the case of the other virtues, as you say, if a man says that he is a good flute-player, or skillful in any other art in which he has no skill, people either laugh at him or are angry with him, and his relations think that he is mad and go and admonish him. (323a)

LS: You see how he uses here virtue and *technē*, art, synonymously. That's not Socrates, that's Protagoras. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
But when justice is in question, or some other political virtue, even if they know that he is unjust, yet, if the man of his own accord comes publicly forward and tells the truth, then, what in the other case was held by them to be good sense, i.e., to tell the truth— (323b)

LS: *Sōphrosynē*. Let us keep the term "moderation," although it doesn't make sense here, but that's important. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
what is said to be moderation, that is to tell the truth, they now deem to be madness. They say that all men ought to profess justice whether they are just or not— (323b)

LS: "All men ought to profess that they are just." I mean, "professing justice" is too general a translation. Quite a few people profess justice without claiming that they are just. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
whether they are just or not, and that a man is out of his mind who says anything else.

LS: "Who does not raise this claim to his being just." And what does this prove?

Mr. Reinken:
Their notion is, that a man must have some degree of justice, and that if he has none at all, he ought not to be in human society. (323b-c)

LS: In other words, it is necessary that everyone should participate in justice in whichever way. Now which is the case here stated, this interesting limit case? How does this man here discussed participate in justice?

Student: By claiming to be just.[10]

LS: In other words, sheer hypocrisy. Now you see[11] [that] moderation, *sōphrosynē*, is here used as the opposite of insanity or madness; that is, it shows you the spread of the meaning of this Greek term. Good. Now while it is moderate not to claim or pretend to possess a virtue or art *other* than the political which one does not possess, it is moderate, sensible to claim or pretend to possess justice even if one does not possess it. So much do men believe that everyone who wishes to live among men must somehow participate in justice. The appearance of justice, nay, the pretense to justice is perfectly sufficient. [It] fills the bill. The alleged gift of Zeus is in fact a mere pretense. Zeus has given men the possibility to claim that they are just, to pretend they are just. And some are of course also just; that is not denied. So justice is radically by convention. There is nothing natural in it. Yes?

Student: Isn't there a certain point here, because all men believe that all men participate in justice, a man who does not even make a claim that he is just is by definition not a man.[12] I mean, he doesn't even admit that there is such a thing as justice . . .

LS: No, no, that's not the point. He doesn't say that there is no such thing as justice. What he literally says is, "I am an unjust man," and he may do this from a sense of repentance, for example. But in most cases, I believe, if someone even today would say, "I have committed a crime and I have to do that," I believe in many cases his relatives would say, "Don't do that, make up for it in any other way, perhaps by sending the damaged family a check or so. But don't do that; you will compromise your family, think of your children, your reputation, of what would happen if their father were in jail," etc. [Laughter] But the key point here, what is decisive, is that what Protagoras means by the gift of Zeus comes out: it is a mere extra, a mere varnish. By the way, we know this from another Platonic dialogue, the *Theaetetus*, according to which Protagoras has said that the just, the noble, and the pious things are all by convention. It is specifically ascribed [to Protagoras] there in the *Theaetetus*, 167c, 172a to b, and 177c.[x] And of course a further consequence of this,[13] since this is sufficient, is that men do not believe that all men are or must be just: they believe only that a man who doesn't claim to be just is mad. Regarding one's justice, it is just to be unjust, one can say, namely, to lie, lying being one kind of injustice. Mr. Schaefer?

Mr. Schaefer: Well, isn't it possible that Zeus gave to some men the ability to partake in justice by claiming to be just only, and also gave to other men, or even to most men, the ability to be just actually?

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[x] "For the sorts of things that seem to each city just and noble, these things also are [just and noble] for it, for so long as it recognizes them"—*Theaetetus*167c. (Socrates is speaking for Protagoras here.) See similar statements at 172a–b, 177c–d.

LS: Yes, but when you look back at 322d [to] what Zeus said to Hermes, you will see that Zeus said in very unequivocal language: Give it to all and all must participate in it. And he doesn't make this nice distinction.

Mr. Schaefer: Well, isn't it possible for him to give it to all but in different ways?

LS: No, there is no doubt that this is a radical correction of the myth, a radical correction of the myth.

Mr. Shulsky: The discussion seems to have shifted in this part to justice, to *dikaiosunē,* and [14]maybe the fact is that everyone has the sense of shame, everyone—because Zeus gave two things, the sense of shame and justice. And here he covers up—

LS: Yes, that is very good. In other words, the sense of shame can be identified with hypocrisy, as it were a noble hypocrisy. That's a good point. Will it be recorded that Mr. Shulsky made a good point? [Laughter] Fine. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:
I have been showing that they are right in admitting every man as a counsellor about this sort of virtue, as they are of opinion that every man is a partaker of it. (323c)

LS: Because they believe, not that it is factually the case. They believe everyone must partake of it.

Mr. Reinken:
And I will now endeavor to show further that they do not conceive this virtue to be given by nature, or to grow spontaneously, but to be a thing which is taught, and which comes to a man by taking pains. No one would instruct, no one would rebuke, or be angry with those— (323c-d)

LS: No, let us stop here first. Now the participation in justice and the other political virtue is due not to nature, of course, nor to divine gift (that is also clear by now), but to human agency. To which human agency? To teaching. We must see; that will be developed in the sequel. Because he must of course say that men acquire it by *teaching*, otherwise he loses the basis of his claim, his professional claim. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
No one would instruct, no one would rebuke or be angry with those whose calamities they suppose to be due to nature or chance; they do not try to punish or to prevent them from being what they are; they do but pity them. Who, for example, is so foolish as to chastise or instruct the ugly, the diminutive, or the feeble? And for this reason: because he knows that good and evil of this kind is the work of nature and of chance, whereas if a man is wanting in those good qualities which are attained by study and exercise and teaching— (323c-d)

LS: Now let us stop here. How did he call these qualities? What was the common name in this translation for these kind[s of things], like being beautiful, and tall, and strong? How did he call them? Well, in Greek, at any rate, he calls them the beautiful or noble things and their opposites. I mean, the thought doesn't require any—well, there no one is indignant about another man's bodily defects; they can annoy him, but he cannot as a sensible man blame him.

The noble or beautiful things—that is important—are by nature or by chance, and this implies [that] justice does not belong to the noble things. But to what? Here a distinction has to be considered—which is crucial, for example, in Plato's *Republic*, but also elsewhere—between the noble and fine or beautiful, and the necessary. Justice may be necessary without being beautiful. The clearest case of the non-coincidence of the just and the beautiful is the case of punishment. It is beautiful, noble, fine, praiseworthy if we do compensate, if we act justly, but not in all cases. For example, if we punish someone justly, that is also praiseworthy, but if someone is punished justly, that is nothing of which he can be proud: it is nothing admirable, it is nothing beautiful, but it is necessary. So in other words, the clear implication here of the expression "the noble things," used [here] without any qualification, is [that] justice does not belong to the noble. Justice is, if it is of any value, a necessity. A necessity. Well, take an ordinary example from a different sphere: to undergo an operation for an appendectomy, to say nothing of harsher diseases, is necessary from time to time, but no one could ever say it is something noble, praiseworthy, fine, beautiful. His conduct toward the operation may be, but not the operation itself. Yes? So, good. Let us go on here.

Mr. Reinken:
I'm saying—

LS: No. "I believe because they know that these, the noble things, and the opposite come to man by nature as well as by chance." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
whereas if a man is wanting in those good qualities which are obtained by study and exercise and teaching, and has only the contrary evil qualities, other men are angry with him, and punish and reprove him. (323c)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. Of the political virtue men believe, that is here implied, it comes about by the three things here mentioned: taking care of, care and training—*askēsis*, from which asceticism derives—and plain teaching. The training is in the center. You must act, act, act and habitually in order to acquire the habit, as Aristotle explained later. In other words, it is not so clear that the political art or the political virtue is acquired exclusively by teaching than maybe these other things; this habitual acting, this training may also be necessary. Yes?

Student: Is it important in any way that in the first three that he mentions, the ugly, the diminutive, or the feeble, that the diminutive is in the center?

LS: Yes, sure, we must explain why this is in the center. Because of the emphasis on the noble or the beautiful, the ugly would be more natural as the center. There must be some reason. I do not know the reason, but the question is well taken. Sure, yes. Now let us read the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
Of these evil qualities one is injustice, another impiety; and they may be described generally as the very opposite of political virtue. In such cases, any— (323e)

LS: Now let us stop here for a moment. The question arises—he says here: "of which one is both unjustice and impiety and generally speaking all the opposites of political virtue." And the position of that "one" is ambiguous and gives rise to the question that there may be other things than political virtue the actions of which give rise to indignation. We would have to consider that. But here he speaks of justice, piety, and the rest of the political virtues, and that is very strange because there is no reference to the gods in Protagoras's non-mythical speech—in the myth, all the time. We see here formerly he had spoken of justice and moderation; now he speaks of justice and piety. Piety takes the place of moderation, *sōphrosynē*, which is the opposite not only of madness but of *hybris* as well. This one simply has to know; of course, the first source we have for such things is Aristotle's *Ethics*, with its precise and detailed descriptions and definitions. But Aristotle uses the word *sōphrosynē* in the very narrow sense where it means only temperance regarding sensual pleasures. That is a very limited meaning. It means something like sobriety not only regarding intoxicating beverages but also regarding the other things which intoxicate us, like success or whatever it may be. And therefore it means sanity in a very broad sense opposed to insanity, but also that aspect of sanity according to which we are reminded of man's limitations: limitations of man as man and therefore in opposition to *hybris.* This is all here implied.

Yes, now let us read from here on a larger part. But let us not forget the main point. Protagoras tries to prove that virtue, and in particular political virtue, is teachable. And the sign is that [15]regarding other things, men are not blamed for their lack of it, whereas regarding the lack of political virtue they are blamed and people get angry at them. Now let us go on from this point. Let us read the end of this passage. Yes? Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:
In such cases any man will be angry with another and reprimand him—clearly because he thinks that by study and learning the virtue in which the other is deficient may be acquired. (324a)[xi]

LS: —As we read before, that political virtue can be acquired by teaching.
Now read the beginning of the next sentence.

Mr. Reinken:
If you will think, Socrates, of what punishment can do for the evildoer, you will see at once— (324a)

[xi] The tape was changed at this point.

LS: No, "this will teach you." He uses the word "teaching" here because what he's preparing is the assertion that punishment is a major agency of teaching. Yes? And therefore the paradoxical use here: if you only will consider punishment it, the punishment [LS chuckles], will teach you. Yes? Someone raised his finger. Mr. . . .

Student: In another translation, he says virtue is to be acquired by application and learning.

LS: Yes, that would be better.

Student: Then education alone would not be sufficient.

LS: No, not alone. Surely not. But still, punishment would not ordinarily be—inflicted punishment is not what we understand by application, unless you spontaneously go to the flogger and say: I am very eager to be flogged in order to become better. [LS laughs] Yes?

Mr. Shulsky: The practice part is dropped out this time, what it is that teaches. Before it was application, practice, and teaching; here it is just application and teaching.

LS: Yes, but *epimeleia* means really something more like "care." "To be concerned with" would be more literal. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: Surely that explanation he gives of why men are angry is an ironically high view of man.

LS: What?

Mr. Reinken: Well, he says that man becomes angry clearly because he thinks that this could all have been prevented by study.

LS: Yes, but still, look at the simple case of anger, say, a brawl in the street. What is it about? And disregarding the cases of simple drunkenness and so, what is it about? Is it not in most cases because someone feels to be offended by something that the other said or did, i.e., by some injustice which the other did? You mean the cases of wanton aggressiveness?

Mr. Reinken: No, I was thinking of—well, for example, we came upon this in the *Gorgias*: the child who kicks the table. It seems to show anger in its natural origins.

LS: Yes, but perhaps this will become clearer when we read the whole. I mean, in other words, it does not depend on whether it is a complete analysis here of anger and indignation, but what Protagoras means in this context. But first let us read it and return to the question if it is still necessary.

Mr. Reinken:
If you will think, Socrates of what punishment can do for the evildoer, this will teach you[xii] that in the opinion of mankind virtue may be acquired. No one punishes the evildoer under the notion, or for the reason, that he has done wrong—only the unreasonable fury of a beast is so vindictive. But he who desires to inflict rational punishment does not punish for the sake of a past wrong which cannot be undone; he has regard to the future and is desirous that the man who is punished, and he who sees him punished, may be deterred from doing wrong again. He punishes for the sake of prevention, thereby clearly implying that virtue is capable of being taught. This is the notion of all who punish others either privately or publicly. And the Athenians, especially, your fellow citizens no less than other men, punish and correct all whom they regard as evildoers. (324a-c)

LS: It is nicer in the original: "the other human beings do that and not the least the Athenians, your fellow citizens, they are particularly grand punishers." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And hence we may infer them to be of the number of those who think that virtue may be acquired and taught. Thus far, Socrates, I have shown you clearly enough, if I am not mistaken, that your countrymen are right in admitting the tinker and the cobbler to advise about politics, and also that they deem virtue to be capable of being taught and acquired. (324c-d)

LS: Yes. Now you see here very clearly the difference between the two propositions: that virtue in the sense of moderation and justice can be taught does not prove that statesmanship can be taught, and especially if you add in each case every human being. Every human being can perhaps be made just and moderate, but no one would say that everyone can be made a statesman. And this we have already said; we will come back to that.

Justice and these other qualities here, piety and so on, are brought about not so much by teaching and application and training but by punishment, but by punishment. In other words, the translation of the mythical expression "gift of Zeus" is "punishment." And here you see the great difference between the arts and the political virtue. While at least in former times an apprentice with a shoemaker or someone else got a lot of spankings, but the true instruction in the art of shoemaking did not consist in the spanking. He had to show him. But here in this case, the spanking alone would be enough. You can also say, if the word "punishment" is too harsh, social pressure, which is also a kind of punishment, of course. The arts proper are not acquired by social pressure; the inclination to choose this or that profession may be due to social pressure, but not the learning of the art.

Now this doctrine of punishment, of which this is the earliest statement, is identical with the Platonic one. There is no difference here, no punishment merely for the sake of revenge, merely for a kind of equalization of pain and pleasure, as we have read in

[xii] In the translation: "you will see at once."

Grotius—you remember?[xiii] I have suffered pain because someone did me wrong and equalization demands that he also suffer pain. This is very far from Socrates and Plato, and even from Protagoras. It must either improve the evildoer or deter other evildoers, namely, the latter in the case [that] the evildoer is not improvable, then he must be executed. We are not squeamish about that. But then the execution, especially if it is public and speedy (not one appeal after another for years and years), and perhaps even somewhat spectacular, makes a deep impression on all who see it. Yes. Machiavelli is a good man to read on this subject, when he describes how Cesare Borgia used a kind of Himmler in order to get some order into the Romagna, the country around Rome where there were so many robber barons and so on. [16]Then after he had used him and Cesare became unpopular because of the toughness of this guy, he had him cut into four pieces; and one morning the people of this town found this Remirro, was his name—I call him Himmler [laughter]—in the marketplace cut into pieces and then of course they were still even more [LS chuckles] overawed by Cesare Borgia than even before, because he proved to be opposed to such cruel measures.[xiv] [Laughter]

At any rate, here let me first say what I have to say about it. Again, we see here that political art, the political virtue, and virtue unqualified are used synonymously. But this question arises: If the human agency for producing virtue is punishment, how can Protagoras claim to be a teacher of virtue? Will not all potential pupils run away from him [laughter] because he inflicts much greater hardship on them? Even Hippias, of whom he spoke, he inflicts mathematics on them and that's already bad enough. [Laughter] Yes. Good. Now someone raised his hand or finger.

Student: No, that was answered.

LS: I see, all right. Well, then let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:
There yet remains one problem, which— (324d)

LS: Yes, well, *aporia* is a bit more—a bit different. *Aporia* means "absence of a way out." Is not *aporia* used also in present-day scholarly jargon? The absence of a way out: now what would be the best equivalent of that?

Student: Dead end?

LS: No, not dead end.

Student: More embarrassment, or—

LS: Yes, "predicament." "Predicament" might do. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

[xiii] Strauss taught a course on Grotius in the autumn quarter of 1964.
[xiv] *The Prince*, chapter 7.

There yet remains one predicament which has been raised by you about the sons of good men.

LS: Men here: *hombres*. *Hombres*. Now he comes closer to the real problem, because these *hombres* are of course the potential addressees of Protagoras's teaching. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
What is the reason why good men teach their sons the knowledge which is gained from teachers, and make them wise in that, but do nothing toward improving them in the virtues which distinguish themselves? And here, Socrates, I will leave the myth and resume the argument.

LS: "The *logos*." Now that's terrific. Didn't he talk non-mythically already for two pages? But here we have it straight from his mouth that this was still myth. . . . Now let us see what this means. Hitherto Protagoras has only confirmed Socrates's or the Athenians' view that the political art or political virtue or virtue in general is not teachable, except if you identify teaching with punishment. . . . Now he begins really to take issue with Socrates. Now the issue becomes serious, and an expression of that is that he says everything preceding was myth, the whole treatment of the difficulty caused by Athenian democracy. (You remember that the Athenians permit everyone to speak on political matters, but not on expert specialist matters.) The whole treatment of the predicament caused by the Athenian democracy is myth. The difficulty caused by the practice of the good men, the good *hombres* cannot be treated mythically. And we know already the reason: because these good *hombres* cannot be fooled, as Protagoras has said. The multitude you can fool and you can tell them stories, but you cannot do this in the case of these clever men who run the cities.

And the presupposition of all this is of course that the teaching of Protagoras, which Protagoras supplies as distinguished from what men in general supply, is addressed only to the potential *hombres* and not to the shoemakers and so on. Yes. Good. Let us see. Now he comes to this point.

Mr. Reinken:
Please consider— (324d)

LS: Now you see this is a little example illustrating what I said before, that it is not so easy to say what is and what is not a Platonic myth. This part, obviously non-mythical speech from 323 on to 324c, belongs to the myth although it is no longer in mythical language. Here is the transition. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Please consider—

LS: That shows already the transition. Yes, reflect. Reflect, that is, reasoning. No longer myth. Myth means you are told a story and you listen to it. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Is there or is there not some one quality of which all the citizens must be partakers if there is to be a city at all? In the answer to this question is contained the only solution of your difficulty; there is no other. (324e)

LS: You see also the way of speaking is now logical and in no way mythical. Reflect, a question, and then reasoning if this and this is so; and if this and this is so, that and that follows. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
For if there be any such quality—

LS: "If there be such one thing," yes?

Mr. Reinken:
For if there be such one quality, this one thing is not the art of the carpenter, or the smith, or the potter, but justice and self-control and piety and, in a word, human virtue—if this— (324e-325a)

LS: Again, the virtue of an *hombre*. That is very paradoxical, as you will see.

Mr. Reinken:
if this is the quality of which all men must be partakers, and which is the very condition of their learning or doing anything else, and if he who is wanting in this, whether he be a child only or an adult man or woman, must be taught and punished, until by punishment he becomes better, and he who rebels against instruction and punishment is either exiled from the city or condemned to death under the idea that he is incurable— (325a-b)

LS: Now we must stop here in this sentence, because otherwise that will be too much material. So he speaks truly of the one thing needful. The *unum necessarium* is very strange: the *unum necessarium*, the one thing needful in which all citizens must partake, is justice, moderation, and saintliness. I will translate it now differently because it is a different Greek word—that is to say, the virtue of an *hombre*. Now you see he does no longer speak here of political virtue, as is shown very clearly by the reference to children and women in the immediate sequel. Now what this means, this change—he had spoken of piety before but not of saintliness. Already we have seen before [that] Protagoras had replaced justice and moderation by justice and piety, and this would in itself permit the conclusion that he identifies moderation and piety. That this is not absurd you see from what I told you before, that moderation can be used as the opposite to *hybris*, to insolent pride, and then it becomes immediately clear. Now this word *sōphrosynē* had also been identified with caution—you know, when he [17][said] that a man who would reveal his injustice and not pretend to be just, although he is unjust, lacks this *sōphrosynē*. So *sōphrosynē* is a caution which commands to lie, and which conclusion is to be drawn from that I leave to you. Now, however, Protagoras adds saintliness to justice *and* moderation. The meaning is partly clear from the context. He drops *political* virtue in any emphatic sense and includes the virtue of women and children, of whom no one would

expect the political art, the art of the statesman. Perhaps this saintliness comes in with a view to women and children. Protagoras surely is here completely silent about that virtue which he teaches.

Now a word about this saintliness. The Greek word is *hosiōtes*. Now this word is used in two different connections. The saintly is used in contradistinction to the just, and then it means the just things are the things of human origins, and the saintly are things of divine origins. But the distinction means also this: that the just consists of the duties toward men, whereas the saintly [consists] of the duties toward the gods. But there is another opposition. This saintly *hosion* is also used in contradistinction to *hieron*, to the holy. And then in this connection the *hosion*, the saintly, means the profane in the literal sense: what is in front of the temple, *pro fano*. What is in the temple is saintly, and what is outside of the temple but still demanded by the gods: that is profane. For example, Aristotle uses (in the *Politics*, I believe) the term *hosion* only once, when he speaks of abortion—up to which point abortion is permitted, beyond which it is no longer saintly;[xv] and it has always this implication of a divine law.

Now, at any rate, this much is clear. The virtue of which Protagoras speaks here consists of three virtues—we never had so many before: justice, moderation, and saintliness. And it so happens that he enlarges here also the addressees of these things into three groups: children, men, and women. And I have indicated that there could be a connection between these two things. However, let us go on here to achieve as much as we can without rushing. We are still in the midst of that long conditional sentence. Yes?

Mr. Shulsky: Well, after listing justice, moderation, and saintliness, how can he then call that the virtue of the *hombre*—the *andros aretē*, especially later on when he applies that to women and children as well?

LS: Yes, that is a great problem which we cannot clear up now. Well, I can only give a general answer. Protagoras confuses the issue. Whereas originally it was clear that what he was teaching was something addressed to the cream of Athens, the male cream of Athens, now he drowns that, as it were, into something which every child, every woman, and perhaps even every slave is supposed to have. And why he does it we must see, but we must first have the facts together. But in order to satisfy Mr. Shulsky and not keep him in any unnecessary suspense, because I cannot be so cruel, the point is this—well, the simplest thing is I read to you my statement at the end of this passage and then we go on.

Protagoras claims to teach human beings—*anthrōpoi*, not *hombres*, because *hombres* in the strict sense are only men like him, of course, wise men—to educate human beings in well-advisedness, which includes the art of speaking. And Socrates calls this the political art. Protagoras, in contradistinction to Gorgias, does not limit his claim to being a teacher of rhetoric, but he claims much more: well-advisedness concerns as much the thoughts as what you say. And Gorgias also makes his mistake: he said he does not ordinarily teach justice, and then this brought him into great troubles, because then he would be

[xv] *Politics* 7.16 (1335b19–26).

responsible for the misuse of rhetoric by some unjust students. Now Gorgias's claim is much more modest than that of Protagoras, but also much less cautious than the claim of Protagoras. Protagoras puts a much stronger emphasis on the danger which he incurs than Gorgias [does], and on his precautionary measures. You remember that long speech: Is his great claim, so to speak, that he teaches the political art and all this sort of thing in all its aspects not one part of his precautionary measures? In other words, he guarantees the parents, "Your son, when comes to me, he will become juster or more moderate, more pious every day," which Gorgias never claimed. That may very well be, but there is a great difference in the danger of which he thinks—namely, that the parents, the fathers might be envious of this man who takes their sons away from them and whom they will more admire than their own fathers: an unbearable insult.

But there is also another danger of which he does not think and of which Socrates reminds him, which can be stated very simply as follows: You make a great mistake Protagoras; you think that the many can be trifled with very easily. (You remember he said the many don't notice anything, so to speak.) Here you are mistaken: the Athenian *dēmos* is very clever. And therefore [he is] warned by Socrates of the danger which he is running in Athens. [18]In his long speech [he] drowns the distinction between the virtue of the top men, which he teaches, into the virtue which is expected of everyone, including women and children. So he, in contradistinction to Gorgias, brings into oblivion the fact that the art which he teaches can be misused. Gorgias had granted that his art can be misused, but said: It is not my fault. Protagoras[xvi] is so cautious that no one who has heard his speech can in any way think of the fact that his art can be misused, because virtue, virtue in the sense especially of justice and moderation: all the time, the whole world teaches moderation and justice, and I too. So that's good, but he doesn't leave it at that. He doesn't speak at all in this long speech of his own teaching; he speaks only of what other people teach: the fathers, the wet-nurses, and the nurses, and the pedagogues, the schoolteachers, and the city. And this is an amazing thing. After all, the whole speech was still meant to serve the purpose of making clear to this ambitious but not very bright young man Hippocrates what he will learn from Protagoras.

And then Protagoras makes this very long speech, surpassing in length all comparable speeches ever occurring in Plato. He makes this long speech, and the boy doesn't know a little bit, [not] a tiny wee bit more of what Protagoras teaches. Is it not amazing? And he makes his art, in other words, utterly unattractive to Hippocrates, because he brings it together with all these kinds of teachings through which he has gone and which he loathes, grammar school etc., and that still more, no, no! In other words, Protagoras plays into Socrates's hands; Socrates doesn't have to say anything. He does exactly what Socrates wanted him to do, and the funny thing is that this is done by Protagoras, who boasts of his candor: *he* doesn't conceal the fact that he is a sophist. He is outspoken because lack of outspokenness merely increases suspicion, makes life worse for him. He boasts of his candor, but owing to Socrates's warning he is super-cautious, so much so that he doesn't bring out at all what he is teaching, so much that he endangers his whole enterprise. In other words, more simply stated: this teacher of well-advisedness is very poor at advising himself.

[xvi] Strauss says "Gorgias," evidently in error.

Now to what extent poor Hippocrates became aware of this marvelous game which Socrates is playing with Protagoras, it is impossible to say. But one thing he must have seen clearly, what is interesting about this kind of thing: he doesn't say a word in this long speech about his own contribution. Socrates had told him: In spite of your marvelous candor and at the same time caution (he spoke of them at the same time), you don't see what you are up against here in Athens. This is a very clever *demos*; they cannot be so easily trifled with as with the *dēmos*, say, in a Boeotian village, and you have to be very careful here. Now Protagoras [and Socrates], [19]kind of like two ogres, laugh at each other. Protagoras understands him and he is very cautious, but [LS laughs] he is too cautious, and this must have its effect on that poor boy. [Laughter] Good.

Now this is my explanation of the fact that there is this back and forth between the virtue of man, of *hombres,* and then that virtue which is expected of everyone, however low. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: I shudder to do so, but may I give a lower explanation more favorable to Protagoras?

LS: Please.

Mr. Reinken: When Mr. Shulsky raised the question before Socrates expounded, it struck me that this is consistent with the hypocrisy that he urged before, and this happy hypocrisy is part of the political necessity as the sophists see it, getting those who do not by nature have a certain virtue to partake in it, to get *anthrōpoi* to behave according to virtue, which by its nature belongs only to a few but it happens to be necessary for more.

LS: But you must not forget—that is all right as far as it goes, but you must consider the context. Socrates came there with Hippocrates. You remember, he warned him that it's a dangerous thing: Soul food you cannot carry away in a basket. You have to carry it in your soul, and therefore if it corrupts, has a corrupting effect, it will have it right away. Do you see? Whereas if it is body food, you can still show it to an experienced man or woman at home and resist it, and it is a very great risk you take. And how can Socrates be so unscrupulous to expose poor Hippocrates, the son of a fine family, to such nefarious influences? Here we see Socrates is such a marvelous manipulator. I mean, the word has now a very low meaning, but he is such a marvelous leader of souls that he makes Protagoras, this great Protagoras, dance to his tune.

Mr. Reinken: I'm not denying that. I am just saying that there was a certain truth in what Protagoras said, even if he was being led by the nose.

LS: Yes, sure. Otherwise, how could he have the reputation of . . . But still, think of that poor boy who came here to hear magnificent fireworks as you would expect from such people, and who was especially wishing to hear of a kind of teaching which was not as dull and as much interspersed with spankings as the teachings he has had hitherto. [20]The fact that Protagoras had told him that he won't learn mathematics doubtless was a good bait, but this was a long time ago. And in addition, to say what you do not teach is not

enough, you have also to say what you do teach. This is in my opinion the reason why the bait, the virtue of the *hombres,* never completely disappears; but then it is also obscured by this ordinary virtue which even women are supposed to have, and which of course is in no way attractive to our slave-hunting fellow Hippocrates.

We are now in the middle of a very interesting story, but for sheer reasons of vulgar prudence, lest I create another scandal, I will stop here. I am mighty glad that I could make it.

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[1] Deleted "Any other announcements? If not"
[2] Deleted "he."
[3] Deleted "we assume always"
[4] Deleted "there is always . . . "
[5] Deleted "that."
[6] Deleted "**Student:** . . . . **LS:** Pardon? . . . No, ah"
[7] Deleted "accepts this"
[8] Deleted "a something."
[9] Deleted "he is such an excellent—"
[10] Deleted "**LS:** Pardon? **Same Student:** By claiming to be just."
[11] Deleted "here."
[12] Deleted "**LS:** Yes, this is what the myth is . . . ."
[13] Deleted "that"; moved "is."
[14] Deleted "maybe this is where"
[15] Deleted "that other things . . . "
[16] Deleted "and."
[17] Deleted "spoke."
[18] Moved "he."
[19] Moved "kind of like two ogres"
[20] Deleted "I mean"

Session 9: April 26, 1965

The Long Speech of Protagoras, The Teacher of Virtue

(325b-329d)

Leo Strauss: Let's begin. So I remind you of the context: Protagoras claims to teach virtue or the political art. Socrates doubts whether these things are teachable. Protagoras proves the teachability of virtue by a myth and by a *logo*s, which *logos* however is part of the myth. More precisely, he proves in this way that all men, and in particular the Athenians, act wisely in regarding virtue as teachable; and the Athenians act wisely in permitting everyone to partake in political deliberation. This we have finished.

Now the point at which we are now engaged is where Protagoras proves that not merely all men but the outstanding *hombres*, the good *andres*, teach virtue to their sons, contrary to what Socrates had asserted. Now in the passage which we read at the end of last meeting up to 325a inclusive, if you have the passage, you tell them on which page it is.

Mr. Reinken: Page 23 in the LLA edition. We were in the middle of that long conditional sentence, just at the mark b.

LS: Yes, there we begin. Now only one moment. In the passage which we read last time, Protagoras had shown that the teaching in that virtue which the *polis* needs embraces three virtues: justice, moderation, and saintliness. And in addition, whether it is the virtue of children, men, or women—also three again, as it happens. [1]This teaching takes place above all by punishment. This much we have seen. And this teaching is of course also applied by the outstanding men to their own kids. Now he becomes, however, more specific in 325b, that is the conclusion of that very long conditional sentence, "if this is so," namely, if all men must partake of virtue. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
[Protag.:] if what I am saying be true, good men have their sons taught other things and not this, do consider how extraordinary their conduct would appear to be. (325b)

LS: More literally, "how strange, how amazing, how marvelous the good ones would become." He omits here "men," for a reason which will appear later. He now returns to what the good *hombres* in particular teach their sons. This doesn't come out clearly in the translation, probably. Before, he had spoken of children, which means normally—naturally, since men are more interested or were more interested in their sons in former times than in their daughters—[it] means [2]ordinarily also sons; but still, the word "sons" is unmistakable. A child could also refer to a daughter. Xenophon somewhere says in the *Memorabilia*, in a speech of Socrates: If a man dies and leaves his sons to educate and his daughters to watch[i]—which implies that the main point of having daughters is not

[i] *Memorabilia* 1, 5.2

education but to watch them [LS laughs], but this is only a little joke. The good men surely teach their sons this common or universal virtue which is expected of everyone. If they did not, they would believe that virtue arises in a strange, marvelous manner; we can say, by divine gift only. Now let us go on here.

Mr. Reinken:
For we have shown that they think virtue capable of being taught and cultivated both in private and public. But though it can be taught and cultivated, they have their sons taught lesser matters ignorance of which does not involve the death penalty. But greater things of which ignorance may cause death or exile to their children, if these have no training in or knowledge of virtue—aye, confiscation as well as death and, in a word, the ruin of families—those things, I say, they are supposed not to teach them, not to take the utmost care that they should learn. How improbable is this, Socrates! (325b-c)

LS: Now let us stop here. You remember that he opposes Socrates's thesis that men like Pericles had not taken care of the education of their sons in virtue. Here he begins to refer back again to what not merely the outstanding men but human beings in general believe. [3]But we know already: they believe that virtue is teachable. Why else do they spank people? *We* have demonstrated, he says: the first person plural. Now the demonstration occurs in the myth: It is not I, Protagoras, who is speaking in the myth, that is in a way a common view. Yes, let us go on. Incidentally, here he returns to "children," *paides* in Greek, from the sons of which he has spoken before. That is a kind of return to the more common things, the universal virtues as distinguished from that outstanding [virtue]. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Education and admonition commence in the first years of childhood, and last to the very end of life. Mother and nurse and father and tutor are vying with one another— (325c-d)

LS: No, that doesn't—" the nurse, and the mother, and the tutor" (tutor was a slave) "and the father himself." This big figure, even he. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and the father himself are vying with one another about the improvement of the child as soon as ever he is able to understand what is being said to him; he cannot say or do anything without their setting forth to him that this is just and that is unjust; this is noble, that is base; this is pious, that is impious; do this and don't do that. (325c-d)

LS: Now these are of course great verities, but the question is what Protagoras makes of them. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And if he willingly obeys, well and good.

LS: No, that's not there. "If he willingly obeys"—no apodosis.

Mr. Reinken:
If not, he is straightened by threats and blows, like a piece of bent or warped wood. (325d)

LS: Yes, "with threats and spankings." So in other words, silence about any rewards—I mean, candy they might get, but emphasis again on threats and spankings is the major educational device. We see here that the early training of these kids, sons of great fathers, is chiefly [done by][ii] people other than the fathers. The father is somehow the father figure, I believe one would say today, and is somehow in the background. But most of the spanking and threatening is done by other people.

And you see here this nice threefold division, three things that they are taught: the just (that is justice, of course); the noble or base (that belongs to moderation, according to this scheme here); and finally, the pious (which belongs to saintliness). Yes.

Mr. Reinken:
At a later stage—

LS: You see now he gives the whole survey of education. I have no doubt that the historians of education, of Greek education have made the most of this passage, you know. Good. But we are not interested in classical education, we are interested in Protagoras. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
At a later stage they send him to teachers, and enjoin them to see to his manners even more than to his reading and music; and the teachers—

LS: Now "manners" is too little. *Eukosmia*, that is to say—"decency" would be the very least.

Mr. Reinken: Deportment?

LS: Yes, nice deportment. Nice deportment.

Mr. Reinken:
see to his good deportment even more than to his reading and music; and the teachers do as they are asked. And when the boy has learned his letters and is beginning to understand—

LS: He doesn't say anything of "boys." It is still "children" here all the time, although in this case they are probably boys. But it is interesting, the change. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

[ii] The tape skips at this point.

When the child has learned his letters and is beginning to understand what is written, as before he understood only what was spoken, they put into his hands the works of great poets, which he reads sitting on a bench at school. (325e)

LS: "The good poets." "Great poets," that reminds us of the Great Society[iii] in contradistinction to the good society. A good poet is a very high praise at that time. Homer is a good poet because there were also bad poets. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
good poets, which he reads sitting on a bench at school. In these are contained many admonitions—

LS: Did it become clear that they compelled them to do so? That is important. He sits them on the—and they compel them to learn by heart.

Mr. Reinken: No, that doesn't come across.

LS: Yes, well, that is important, because most people don't like to learn by heart and they have to be compelled to do so. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
In these are contained many admonitions, and many tales, and praises, and encomia of ancient, famous men— (326a)

LS: "Of ancient good men," good *hombres*. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
good *hombres*, which he is required to learn by heart—

LS: "Compelled," compelled.

Mr. Reinken:
which he is compelled to learn by heart in order that he may imitate or emulate them and desire to become like them.

LS: Yes, now this second stage is characterized by concern with *eukosmia*, in Greek, this decent deportment with which the nurse and the people at home are not so much concerned. And this nice deportment belongs to the virtue of *sōphrosynē*, of moderation in the broad sense. And this is entrusted to teachers, who of course also use compulsion. But these teachers, they will also praise, as we have seen. Whom? The boys, if they do good? Of course not. They praise the good men of old. Now this stage of the education is no longer open to all: not all Athenian citizens learn these things. Protagoras now praises

[iii] The agenda of domestic legislation initiated by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964–65 that sought to improve the lives of disadvantaged Americans and to bring about the "Great Society." Johnson declared a "War on Poverty" and legislation was proposed to reform education, rejuvenate cities, and provide public housing.

in the level of education. This will become perfectly clear in the sequel, but not every Athenian got that. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Then, again, the teachers of the lyre take similar care that their young disciple is self-controlled— (326a)

LS: That is, moderate. *Sōphrosynē*, always.

Mr. Reinken:
is moderate, and gets into no mischief. And when they have taught him the use of the lyre, they introduce him to the poems of other good[iv] poets—

LS: Yes, very good poets.

Mr. Reinken:
who are the lyric poets; and these they set to music, and make their harmonies and rhythms quite familiar to the children's souls—

LS: Again, they compel them. Teaching and learning is painful, as Aristotle in his wisdom says.[v] And since men by nature dislike the painful, especially unreasonable human beings [LS chuckles], they must be compelled. And therefore, the great change in education which took place when it was felt that learning can be fun—to some extent yes, but not simply. Yes, good.

Mr. Reinken:
in order that they may learn to be more gentle, and harmonious, and rhythmical, and so more fitted for speech and action, for the life of man in every part has need of harmony and rhythm. (326b)

LS: Yes, this is already a much higher stage. The music teachers too teach moderation, i.e., the beautiful, the noble, in contradistinction to the just and the pious. Well, we cannot help thinking here of the education of the soldiers in Plato's *Republic*, which has the same goal, the goal of the whole education being love, *eros*, of the beautiful, longing for the beautiful rather than justice as justice. This shines through here.

You see he puts now speaking before acting, contrary to what he had done before. Well, we have observed earlier in 316d to e the connection between Protagoras and the teachers of music. Protagoras's group appeared to be like the chorus—you remember that, when Socrates saw them first? We approach now gradually the peculiar teaching of Protagoras himself, which is of course not what a child gets from his nurse or his mother, and not even from his father. We approach more and more what not every Athenian is taught. You remember his point was the virtues which he had mentioned *every* man must possess, and therefore in particular every Athenian. Now Protagoras we know teaches

[iv] In the translation: "excellent."
[v] See Aristotle, *Politics* 8.5 (1339a28–29).

rhetoric, among other things; and therefore he puts teaching first. Decent deportment consists primarily in deed, not in speech—although it has also some consequences regarding speech, but the nice point is that the child is nice, is seen and not heard. And that means action, deed, not speech. But now the emphasis shifts to speech, because he is now coming to the higher ranges of education. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Then they send them to the master of gymnastics, in order that their bodies may better minister to the sound mind, and that they may not be compelled through bodily weakness to play the coward in war or on any other occasion. And the more socially influential people are— (326b-c)

LS: Well, let us say more literally, "those who are most powerful." That is better.

Mr. Reinken:
and the more powerful—

LS: No, "and this is being done by those who are most powerful." But the most powerful are the wealthiest.

Mr. Reinken:
the richest are the most powerful.

LS: Yes, and their sons.

Mr. Reinken:
Their children begin to go—

LS: Sons.

Mr. Reinken:
Their sons begin to go to school soonest and leave off latest. (326c)

LS: Yes. That is very interesting, because now we see already clearly the difference in education. There is not one and the same education in virtue given to all. [There is a][4] difference between the education of the poor and their children and the education of the rich. It is this education of course which enables the rich to hold their own in a democracy and to be the leaders. They are being taught a more refined kind of virtue, here indicated by the words moderation, taste, whatever you might call it, the graces of both speech and deed.

Now the conclusion we can draw already here is this: that the virtue taught by Protagoras will not be the one which Zeus has given indiscriminately to all human beings and which is inculcated by spanking. Here there is no longer any reference to compulsion, although there is an indication of that when they say there are those who begin earliest to go to the teachers and are the latest to get rid of them—there is a certain negative posture toward

going to school implied in that. The difference between Protagoras and these teachers is that his teaching is a pleasure, whereas the other teachers, their teaching is a kind of burden. We remember the reference to Hippias. Protagoras's potential pupils are of course the sons of the wealthy. He takes an honorarium, and "that ain't hay,"[vi] what he demands. Now this leads to a difficulty because, as we know from the *Apology* 23c, the companions of Socrates also were the sons of the wealthy; and so therefore if the eunuch thinks that Socrates was a sophist, there was some external plausibility. Protagoras is surrounded by the sons of the rich; Socrates is surrounded by the sons of the rich. Not so simple. Yes, now?

Mr. Reinken:
When they have done with masters, the city[vii] again compels them to learn the laws and live after the pattern which they furnish, and not after their own fancies; and just as in learning to write the writing master first draws lines with a style for the use of the young beginner, and gives him the tablet and makes him follow the lines, so the city draws the laws, which were the invention of good lawgivers living in the olden time, and compels the young man to rule and be ruled in accordance with them. He who transgresses them is to be corrected or, in other words, called to account, which is a term used not only in your country, but also in many others— (326c-e)

LS: Well, one should of course not translate "in your country," but "in your city." That is a slight modernism. Now you see the last stage: again compulsion, exercised by the laws. But what has he omitted in this long way from the wet-nurse to the full-fledged, mature citizen who is educated by the laws? Which stage has he omitted?

Student: His stage.

LS: Exactly. He does not speak of his own teaching. It is enough for him to have indicated where it comes in, somewhere between the last and the stage before the last. The peak is somehow omitted. He returns to that education here which is common to all, the education supplied by the laws. The comparison of laws with letters is fairly natural; laws are ordinarily written in a somewhat more advanced society, but more than that, law is essentially by convention, just as letters are. The city is related to the citizens as the writing teachers are to those who cannot yet write. Now what would follow from that? That sufficiently advanced people do not need the laws. Well, there is a statement somewhere in Aristotle that those—I mean, the properly trained, the philosophers—would do what the reasonable laws prescribe without needing the prescription.[viii] The laws themselves, if they are good, we see here, are not the work of the citizen body but the inventions of superior men who, being the inventors of the laws, were not yet subject to the laws or trained by them. The art of legislation which is practiced by these men, the highest part of the political art according to the *Gorgias*, is infinitely higher than the virtue acquired by obedience to the laws, i.e., ordinary political virtue. Now the question

[vi] The expression presumably comes from a 1943 film of that title, starring the comedy duo Abbott and Costello. The film was based on a story by Damon Runyon.
[vii] In the translation: "state"
[viii] Consider Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.8 (1128a30–32).

arises: Will Protagoras not rather teach this legislative art rather than the rhetorical art? That remains a question.

The good and old legislators—that is essential, that good laws must be old. This is in a certain contrast to the critique of antiquity which Protagoras had given in the myth—you know, the savage, imperfect beginnings—and also his critique of the wise men of old (the old sophists, as he calls it), especially the poets which he gave in 316d. So this we must keep in mind. There is a certain quality of antiquity, virtue of antiquity which Protagoras, speaking politically, cannot deny. Well, from the point of view of, say, the democracy, of course, these old laws stem from a predemocratic age and they act therefore as a brake on democracy. Just as today—you know the famous discussion in this country about the original intentions of the framers of the Constitution, and the Constitution as proper, as written down, and as modified by Supreme Court decisions. It's fundamentally the same problem. Good. Now the conclusion. Human life as a whole is nothing but education in virtue from the cradle to the grave. And the conclusion?

Mr. Reinken:
seeing that justice calls men to account. Now when there is all this care about virtue, private and public, why, Socrates, do you still wonder and doubt whether virtue can be taught? Cease to wonder, for it would be far more surprising if it were not teachable. (326e)

LS: Yes. So virtue is teachable; that is now proven. If you deny that virtue is teachable, Socrates, you deny among other things the efficacy of the work of laws, a major educational instrument, as we have seen. In that case, you, Socrates, and not I, the stranger-sophist, would be the corrupter.

Now the most famous statement of Socrates regarding laws and obedience to them, law-abidingness, is the *Crito*. It would be good, especially for Miss Heldt,[ix] to contrast this point here with the statement of Socrates in the *Crito*, and especially since he does speak in the *Crito* about the Athenian laws regarding education. But he runs over this subject as if it were a hot iron. He barely mentions it, but he mentions it. In other words, if Socrates says law-abidingness is an absolute good, it means of course also to accept the whole education as supplied by the city as good. Does Socrates believe that? That is a great problem in the *Crito*, and of course beyond that.

So now we know it: virtue can be taught. But the trouble is that the virtue that can be taught is not necessarily the virtue taught by Protagoras. That is a difficulty. Protagoras has, as it were, tried to muscle in (if we may say so) between the most advanced private teaching in virtue and the most impressive public teaching, namely, the laws. We must see whether this comes out. So this is the end of the second part of Protagoras's long speech. Now a great difficulty remains.

Mr. Reinken:
But why then do the sons of good fathers often turn out ill? I'll tell you. (326e)

[ix] A student in the course.

LS: He admits the fact you see, that this happens, and he proceeds to give the reason. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
There is nothing very wonderful in this, for if I have been right in what I have been saying, a city[x] can exist only if everyone is an expert in this thing, virtue. If so—and nothing can be truer—then I will further ask you to imagine, as an illustration, some other pursuit or branch of knowledge which may be assumed equally to be the condition of the existence of a state. (326e-327a)

LS: So the argument is very strange. Many good fathers have inferior sons. What's the reason? The reason is that everyone must be an expert in virtue. That is not a good reason, is it? Protagoras doesn't complete his thought. What he implies is that it is impossible that everyone should be a *good* expert in every pursuit. After all, a shoemaker is expert in shoemaking, but he may be a very poor shoemaker nevertheless. Now therefore all men have to be experts in virtue, but many may well be poor experts; what they can produce may be comparable to the shoes which a very poor shoemaker makes. Yes. Now he gives an example. He will show it, will prove it by taking another art. He implies that virtue is an art comparable to these: shoemaking and what-have-you. The example which he chooses is not shoemaking but flute-playing, as you will see. Will you now read again?

Mr. Reinken:
Suppose that there could be no city[xi] unless we were all flute-players, as far as each had the capacity, and everybody was teaching everybody the art, both in private and public, and reproving the bad player as freely and openly as every man now teaches justice and the laws— (327a)

LS: Well, literally, it is the "just and the legal things." They are and they are not identical. As Aristotle puts it, the lawful things are *somehow* the just things,[xii] meaning the lawful things tend to be the just things, or wish to be the just things, or ought to be the just things, but they are not necessarily identical. But our life proceeds on the premise—we would be in the constant state of revolution and anarchy if we did not assume somehow that the legal things are the just things. This is indicated. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
not concealing them as he would conceal the other arts, but imparting them—for all of us profit from each other's justice and virtue, and this is the reason why everyone is so ready to teach anyone the just and the legal things[xiii]— (327b)

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[x] In the translation: "state"
[xi] In the translation: "state"
[xii] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 5.1 (1129b12).
[xiii] In the translation: "justice and the laws"

LS: Yes, now let us stop here, perhaps. Take flute-playing, he says. If there could not be a city without everyone being a flute-player of sorts, everyone would instruct everyone else in flute-playing, from dawn to dusk, from the cradle to the grave, i.e., everyone would be a flute player of sorts and a teacher of flute-playing at the same time. After all, not every flute player can teach flute-playing. Accordingly, everyone is in fact a just man of sorts and a teacher of justice. More precisely, everyone is more of a teacher of justice than [he is] himself just, because we have seen what is required is only a kind of varnish, a kind of appearance of justice. Everyone teaches everyone else the just and lawful things. He compares these things—what did he say: no one conceals them, no one is envious of them, no one conceals them as they do regarding the other *technēmata*, in Greek, in b1. Now that means literally works of art, artful devices. Justice and the laws, they are a kind of artful device. Everyone is necessarily not a just and law-abiding man, strictly speaking, but a knower of them, a knower of them, and he will tell everybody else. And why? Because everyone is interested in the other fellow's being just and law-abiding, don't you see? This is of course a slight overstatement, because not everyone is interested in everyone else's being just and law-abiding, because if this were so, there could be no fellow criminals. After all, every criminal has an interest in his fellow criminal [LS chuckles] not being just and law-abiding.

Here Protagoras completes his sanguine picture of society as a moral institution, as an institution of moral education, which is a theme repeated in many speeches on solemn occasions, and of course it has a rudiment of truth. But we must understand the peculiarity of Protagoras's speech. Society, the big institution in moral education, means in Protagoras that what society does is the sufficient cause of virtue. Virtue is entirely due to what now would be called social pressure. And we remember what he said about the sham character of that virtue of which everyone is supposed to partake. This is the only virtue with which he is concerned here as a universal virtue, and this is indeed a strictly social phenomenon because everyone has an interest in the justice of the other—a selfish interest—but not in his own; that would lead us beyond society. Yes. Good. Now we come to the apodosis of this conditional sentence.

Mr. Reinken:
suppose, I say, that there were the same readiness and liberality among us in teaching one another flute-playing, do you imagine, Socrates, that the sons of good flute-players would be more likely to be good than the sons of bad ones? I think not. Their sons grow up to be distinguished or undistinguished according to their own natural capacities as flute-players, and the son of a good player would often turn out to be a bad one, and the son of a bad player to be a good one, and all flute-players would be good enough in comparison with those who were ignorant— (327b-c)

LS: No, one should say "nevertheless." "Nevertheless, all would be sufficiently good flute players," compared with complete laymen and people who do not understand anything of flute-playing. Now here he begins to refer to the difference of natures. He had referred before to the difference between the rich and the poor regarding education; here a more fundamental difference comes to sight. Not all men are equally gifted for flute-playing or for virtue, but no man is a mere layman regarding virtue. Now what did

he say in the myth when the question of virtue came up? What did Zeus say when Hermes asked him regarding what should be done?

Mr. Reinken: Spread it out evenly.

LS: Not quite. "All should participate." But he didn't say that all must participate equally, so there is no formal contradiction to the myth; it is only [that] he brings something out which he did not bring out in the myth. Yes?

Mr. Bruell: Except there's a contradiction in the sense that it couldn't be strictly compared to an art, following the . . .

LS: Yes, but according to Protagoras it could. I mean, the question is—only that it is of course not developed here, for very good reasons—whether abilities you acquire by spanking are not fundamentally different from abilities which can never be acquired by spanking. Yes? Well, for example, people cannot become good painters by spanking. But if we disregard this important difference, if we understand teachability so [5][broadly] that it includes also faculties which we acquire by being spanked, then we can say [that] virtue is as teachable as painting—only painting is not demanded of everyone, because what would we do with so many painters? I mean, some of you may have seen the exhibitions in 57th Street[xiv] from time to time and [laughter] will have thought of that and might have had similar thoughts. [Laughter] Good. I haven't seen them for a long time, and I am sure they are much better now than— [laughter]. Good. So in other words, here again he reminds us of his claim: just as the difference between the rich and the poor is important for his training, his teaching, the difference between the gifted and the ungifted may be important for Protagoras's teaching. He may be able to teach that level of virtue which is accessible only to the most gifted, for all we know. Yes, now go on where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
In like manner I would have you consider that he who appears to you to be the most unjust of those who have been brought up in laws and society would appear to be a just man and a master of justice if he were to be— (327d-e)

LS: "A craftsman," a craftsman of justice. I mean craftsman, namely, in teaching others to enable themselves. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
if he were to be compared with men who had no education, or courts of justice, or laws, or any restraints upon them—

LS: No, "no necessity of compulsion." No compulsion whatever. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
which compelled them to practice—

[xiv] The annual art fair on 57th Street in Hyde Park, near the University of Chicago.

LS: It is in Greek also repeated, so the emphasis is very much on compulsion. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
[virtue—] with the savages, for example, whom the poet Pherecrates exhibited on the stage at the last year's Lenaean festival. If you were living among men such as the man-haters in his Chorus, you would be only too glad to meet with Eurybates and Phrynondas— (327d)

LS: Like Dillinger,[xv] you know, Dillinger of Athens—or [6][who] is the most, the number one man now on the list? But these were very famous local criminals, the other one at least. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and you would sorrowfully long to revisit the rascality of this part of the world. (327d)

LS: Now everyone living in civilized society, even the greatest criminal, is just compared with uncivilized men as presented to the Athenians in a comedy last year. This last year, if one happens to know the date of that comedy, would mean that the dramatic date of the *Protagoras* would be 421, 422, i.e., after Pericles's death, whereas we have seen a passage which presupposes that Pericles was still alive. In other words, Plato is rather indifferent here regarding the precise dramatic date. And in a comedy, naturally, because we are so remote from these barbarian things that we can laugh about it and can only laugh about it. Again, this confirms [that] virtue is by human agency, more specifically, by *nomos*. All men are by nature bad, we can say. In the myth, he said they lived in dispersion—dissociated, as Hobbes would have said; nature dissociates man—and they owe their goodness entirely to this civilizing process, to this educating process going on the whole day and their whole life. This reminds indeed of Hobbes, and in most of the literature it is simply said: Well, that is the same [as] what Hobbes said. But in a way, I mean, if we don't go deeper, this is correct but still there is a minor difference, I believe. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: Hobbes describes man as having rationally thought: Ah, here, let's have a society.

LS: Yes, yes, that is true, but this has a deeper reason. What induces man to go out of the state of nature?[7]

Student: Self-preservation.

LS: Yes, or fear of violent death. But this fear of violent death as Hobbes interprets it is practically the same as reason. It is practically the same, not theoretically, because Hobbes says fear includes the fear of fear, and therefore precaution and taking care for the future—in other words, a kind of rationality. But more simply, Hobbes teaches of course that there is a natural right, and *the* natural right is self-preservation. Nothing of

[xv] John Dillinger (1903–1934), notorious gangster and bank robber in the American midwest.

this kind in Protagoras and his like. [LS taps on the table for emphasis] That we must never forget. There are many more differences, but this is the minimum and the most obvious difference which we must never forget. There is no natural right here; for Protagoras, all right is convention. Education is, so to speak, omnipotent; *logos*, speech, is omnipotent. But not quite: nature does play a role. In other words, the gifted and ungifted ones, this difference cannot be bridged by speech.

Protagoras vindicates here these unsatisfactory sons of the good fathers: They are not as bad as you, Socrates, say; they are angels compared with any uncivilized man. Think of the corrupting influence of Alcibiades: What is wrong with that, compared with true savagery? So not Protagoras but Socrates accuses the Athenians, whereas Protagoras vindicates all these things. We will come back to that later. Yes, we go on here.

Mr. Reinken:
So you are actually living a life of luxury, Socrates— (327e)

LS: Yes, "you are spoiled." You are spoiled. You derive all the benefits from efficient police and are not even grateful for them. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
You are spoiled, Socrates, and the reason is that all men are teachers of virtue, each one according to his ability. And you say: Where are the teachers? You might—

LS: Socrates's error according to which virtue is not teachable, because Socrates doesn't know any teachers of virtue, is due to the fact that *all* men are teachers of virtue, if to different degrees. The teaching of virtue is so effective that there is no need for special teachers of virtue. But it has of course a very great implication: If there is no need for special teachers of virtue, what happens?

Student: Protagoras . . .

LS: Exactly. So Protagoras saws up the limb on which he is sitting. Now there is an interesting parallel to the passage here in the *Apology of Socrates*, 24e to 25a, where Meletus, the accuser of Socrates, says: Everyone in Athens teaches virtue; the only corruptor is Socrates. But one point is the same: everyone teaches virtue. There's no difficulty, everything is fundamentally fine. And people like to hear that much better than the opposite. That is a part of human nature. Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
You might as well ask, Who teaches Greek? For of that, too, there will not be any teachers found. (327e-328a)

LS: Yes. There are as many teachers of virtue as there are teachers of one's mother tongue, and therefore there are no teachers of one's mother tongue. Everyone learns it as a small child. But is there not a slight difference here between speaking one's mother tongue and using it effectively and powerfully in political assemblies? So here is again

where Protagoras might come in: while everyone speaks Greek, not everyone speaks Greek effectively. That he might learn from him. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Or you might ask, Who is to teach the sons of our artisans this same art which they have learned of their fathers? The father and his fellow workmen have taught them to the best of their ability— (328a)

LS: This reference to the best of their ability—or according to the Greek, "everyone was able"—these are references again to the difference of natures, and therefore the possibilities of a super-teacher of the highest degree of virtue. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
but who will carry them further in their arts? And you would certainly have a difficulty, Socrates, in finding a teacher of them; but there would be no difficulty in finding a teacher of those who are wholly ignorant. And this is true of virtue or of anything else. (328a)

LS: Yes. Now in the case of the ordinary arts, as distinguished from speaking one's mother tongue, it is not easy that a teacher comes to sight. But it is not impossible, as in the case of speaking one's mother tongue, for people learn these arts from their fathers or their father's friends. But this is exactly the case of virtue, that they also learn from their fathers and their father's friends. The teachers other than the fathers—that is to say, Protagoras—teach the same thing as the fathers do, only better. This however is an ambivalent phenomenon. Since he teaches the same things, he cannot be accused of any heterodoxy; but since he does it better than the fathers, the fathers might become envious. Their sons prefer Protagoras to them. Yes. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:
If a man is better able than we are to promote virtue ever so little, we must be content with the result. (327a-b)

LS: So in other words, one could leave this as follows. Protagoras will teach only those not taught by their fathers: orphans. There was a reference to orphans when he spoke of the sons of Cleinias. At any rate, he belongs to those people who help a little bit, only a tiny little wee bit, toward virtue. So what's wrong with that? A nice stranger coming and giving on occasion a little bit of advice preventing such a scoundrel like Alcibiades from committing one of his impossibilities, what is wrong with that? But on the other hand, why should one flock to such a man? But: now comes the great But.

Mr. Reinken:
A teacher of this sort I believe myself to be—

LS: No, "of those, I believe to be one," meaning of those who teach a tiny little wee bit. So that is not much; but now immediately after that.

Mr. Reinken:
and above all other men—

LS: Aha! Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:
help people attain what is noble and good; and I give my pupils their money's— (328b)

LS: Now let us first wait here. "But I, Protagoras, happen to be the most competent teacher of virtue." Now we see here [8]the only occasion where Protagoras speaks in this very long speech of his art. The only one, but in a very limited sense: he speaks only of the fact that he teaches the just and the legal things. Something unimpeachable. Now here is a clear contrast with Gorgias, who came into trouble as you will remember because he did not say that he teaches the just things. The consequence of this is that the theme of the Protagoras who says: I am perfectly normal; I do what everyone else thinks, saying what everyone else says." The theme of the *Protagoras* is therefore not, How must I live or how ought I live—namely, justly or unjustly, the theme of the *Gorgias*—but merely: Is virtue teachable? Or in a way, What *is* virtue? Now this is of course connected with the fact that Gorgias was tired, as we remember, while Protagoras, as we have seen and heard, is not tired. He couldn't make such a speech without any notes, of course, if he were tired. And of course we must also not forget Protagoras's famous candor, which candor is identical with his caution, which also distinguishes him from Gorgias. Yes? So in other words: I am *the* teacher of gentlemen, no one comparable to me. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and I give my pupils their money's worth and even more, as they themselves confess. And therefore I have introduced— (328b)

LS: Now one second. [9]Since Protagoras is not merely a teacher of justice, he acts justly. He claims less for his services than he should. The just man is the man who demands less than his due, according to Aristotle in the *Ethics*. So in other words, there is no danger for our friend Hippocrates in associating with such a paragon of justice. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
I have introduced the following mode of payment. When a man has been my pupil, if he likes he pays my price, but there is no compulsion; and if he does not like,[xvi] he has only to go into a temple and take an oath of the value of the instructions, and he pays no more than he declares to be their value. (328b-c)[xvii]

LS: —After all, he doesn't teach for nothing. But we see here also that Protagoras too needs the gods. How can he get his money in dubious cases if these pupils do not take seriously an oath? Well, at any rate, be it even only for this low reason, we can be sure that Protagoras will not teach impiety. [Laughter] That would be the surest road to losing

[xvi] In the translation: "if he so desires he pays my price, and if he does not."
[xvii] The tape was changed at this point. The unrecorded portion of the passage has been supplied from the translation.

money. This much is clear. Yes, but this passage is particularly interesting for the following reason: because Protagoras says he teaches virtue in a most competent manner and, so to say, the peak, the cream of virtue for money. But we have been told that everyone teaches virtue *gratis*. Everyone says to everybody else all the time: Be virtuous. Now why do the other people teach it without payment, and Protagoras teaches it for payment? Protagoras has no exaggerated notion of human unselfishness. The others teach virtue and justice because they derive benefit from it. In 327b, if we can return to that for one moment—

Mr. Reinken:
For all of us profit from each other's justice and virtue.

LS: Yes, that's it. Now here is a very interesting thing. He says "us," yes, in your reading? The manuscript reading is "you" in the plural. "Us" is a correction by the first editor of Plato, Stephanus. That's quite interesting. "You" of course teach virtue *gratis* because "you" are benefited by it. But I am not benefited by it if the Athenians become more just; I, therefore, must get a remuneration. So I believe [that] although Stephanus was a very respectable editor, a very respectable editor, I prefer the manuscript reading on this point. Did you get the point? The justice and virtue of one another are useful to "you" in the plural and therefore naturally you teach it *gratis*. But it is not useful to me: today I am in Athens and tomorrow I am in another city and I must get a remuneration, to say nothing of the fact that I teach it so much more competently than the others do. Yes, good. Now, we are not yet finished with the speech of Protagoras. Next, 328c3. It's *logos* again, *mython kai logon*. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And such is the art [*logos*][xviii] by which I endeavour to show that virtue may be taught, and that this is the opinion of the Athenians. And I have also attempted to show that you are not to wonder at good fathers having bad sons, or at good sons having bad fathers. The sons of Polycleitus, who are the companions— (328c)

LS: That is a famous sculptor. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
who are the companions of our two friends here, Paralus and Xanthippus, afford an example of this: they are insignificant in comparison with their father; and this is true of the sons of many other artists. And yet I ought not to say the same of Paralus and Xanthippus themselves, for they are young and there is still hope for them. (328c-d)

LS: Now here it is shown that his view regarding the teachability of virtue agrees with the Athenian view, so he is safe, and that the case of the inferior sons is not as hopeless as Socrates had asserted, because they are still young in the practical cases here. In summary, this end, that there is still hope for them, for they are young, that is the last word, is a proper ending for this speech. Hope, altogether a bright picture. We can also say he defends both the fathers and the sons against Socrates's implicit structure. He has

[xviii] In the translation: "Such is my myth, Socrates, and such is the argument."

the best of all worlds or, as one can also say, he eats the cake and has it. Now this will become clear in the sequel. Good.

That was a terrific speech and we, of course, by our splitting it up, by reading step by step, have not experienced the full impact of the speech. For this reason, it would have to be done in a perfect translation, which I am sure does not exist but which could be made, or an almost perfect translation, and be read by a man trained in all the arts of elocution and rhetoric: then we would be duly impressed. So we have to make an effort of our imagination to recover what the feat or the enjoyment which the people present have had. Now let us go on immediately.

Mr. Reinken:
[Soc.:] Protagoras finished his *tour de force* and came to the end— (328d)

LS: No, that is not good. "Protagoras, having shown off so many and such like things, stopped the speech." Now this "so many," the quantity—Protagoras's speech is unusually long for such an occasion. The long speech of Callicles in the *Gorgias* and the long speeches of Glaucon and Adeimantus at the beginning of the second book of the *Republic* are roughly half as long as this speech. And the speech is here indicated to be an *epideixis*, exhibition. That is one kind of rhetoric which according to Aristotle in his *Rhetoric* has the purpose of showing the power of the speaker; whereas a forensic speech, for example, does not have the primary purpose of showing the power of the speaker but to get an acquittal or, for that matter, a condemnation. And the epideictic[xix] speech also has at its end the beautiful, whereas the forensic speech has the just, and the deliberative speech the expedient. Now this is a speech of this kind. It is surely—a *tour de force* is a tolerable paraphrase, but it is a big show, a marvelous show to which we have been entertained. Yes, now begin again, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:
Protagoras having shown off so many and such wise things—

LS: Not "wise," "such like."

Mr. Reinken:[10]
such like things, came to the end, and in my ear

So charming left his voice, that I the while
Thought him still speaking; still stood fixed to hear.

At length, when the truth dawned upon me, that he had really finished, not without difficulty I began to collect myself— (328d)

LS: Yes, let us stop here for a moment. You see, this shows of course again the virtue of a narrated dialogue. Socrates could not very well have told to Protagoras in this way how this speech had affected him. That's clear. And I think the description is very clear: he

[xix] Strauss says "forensic," evidently a misstatement.

still was waiting; he cannot finish his beauty. He cannot finish, but it finished. I once heard a speaker, a very famous man in this country (that's the reason I do not mention his name), who was supposed to give a speech on the atomic bomb. He had no knowledge of the physics or technology, but he started, say, at 8:05 without any notes. He made a speech covering the whole ground marvelously, and at 9:00 sharp, without any preparation but something in him, it stopped, and it stopped absolutely when it was the right time, the right moment for stopping. This kind of thing can be done, as you see. Here [in the dialogue], there was of course no time limit; he could have gone on. And it took him some time, [as we see] when he says: But when I observed that he had in fact finished, because it is unbelievable [LS laughs] that this fountain should ever stop. [Laughter] And then he had to put himself together and come back to reality. And then he said something. What did he say?

Mr. Reinken:
Looking at Hippocrates, I said to him: O son of Apollodorus, how deeply grateful I am to you for having brought me hither; I would not have missed the speech of Protagoras for a great deal. (328d-e)

LS: Yes. So we are told again what we know already, that none other than the son of Apollodorus, Hippocrates, is responsible for the whole dialogue. The whole dialogue is for the sake of Hippocrates: to give him a somewhat better basis for judgment of whether it is wise to become a pupil of Protagoras. This implies, as we have seen from other opportunities, [that] Socrates [11][has known] Protagoras a long time. But he did not yet know how Protagoras would handle such a situation, how he would talk with a view to Hippocrates or his like, and that was quite an experience, as they say. And now the next point.

Mr. Reinken:
For I used to imagine that no human care could make men good; but I know better now. (328e)

LS: Yes, "now I am convinced of this way." Socrates has been charmed into believing that virtue is teachable, i.e., that virtue is of human origin. He shows that he has understood the myth perfectly. If you remember, in the myth it was said [12][virtue] was a gift of Zeus. That of course was merely mythical, a mythical expression for social pressure. Socrates's previous view, then, was that virtue cannot be produced by human agency, and that means that it arises either by divine apportionment (*theia moira*) or by nature. But we have to think for one moment: Is this truly the Socratic–Platonic teaching? (We cannot separate the two conveniently.) Is there not another kind of virtue? I mean, is there not according to Socrates a kind of virtue which is produced by human agency? Well, some of you must know from former discussions.

Well, I read you one passage from the tenth book of Plato's *Republic*, 619b and c. The situation is how people after their deaths choose a lot for the next life.

"When the prophet had thus spoken, he said that the drawer of the first lot at once sprang to seize the greatest tyranny, and that in his folly and greed he chose it without sufficient examination and failed to observe that it involved the fate of eating his own children and other horrors. And then when he inspected it at leisure he beat his breast and bewailed his choice, not abiding by the forewarning of the prophet who had told him: "Be careful." For he did not blame himself for his woes, but fortune and the gods and anything except himself. He was one of those who had come down from heaven [in other words, who had led a former life nobly—LS], a man who had lived in a well-ordered polity in his former life, participating in virtue by habit and not by philosophy."[xx]

Having participated in virtue by habituation without philosophy. There is a kind of virtue which is due entirely to habituation or to that social pressure of which Protagoras speaks, without philosophy, and from Plato's strict point of view genuine virtue is possible only on the basis of philosophy. He has another term for that, occurring in the *Phaedo* among other dialogues: "vulgar virtue" or "political virtue,"[xxi] and that means the one which is brought about by social pressure, by threats of punishment, or maybe also by the carrot, not only by the stick. That is not genuine virtue. In Plato, there is no moral virtue in the Aristotelian sense. This is, I think, crucial if one wants to understand Plato. What Aristotle calls moral virtue would be in between the stick-and-carrot virtue spoken of by Plato and the true virtue which is possible only on the basis of philosophy. This in-between, the virtue of the gentleman, the nonphilosophic gentleman, does not exist in Plato. It is for Plato an ambiguous phenomenon, we may say, which has not the dignity which it has according to Aristotle. This is crucial.

So in other words, what Protagoras says about virtue is not altogether wrong from Socrates's or Plato's point of view. The error consists in the fact that he is silent about the other kind of virtue. This I mention in passing. But that there is such a thing as a socially induced virtue, meant in today's lingo by such terms as "well-adjusted" people, for example, where the question is completely open: To what are you adjusted? For example, if a child has the misfortune of being born in a house of ill repute and cannot, when he or she comes to some understanding, well adjust to this environment, this is a better child, I would assume, than a child that excellently adjusts. So if you speak of adjustment, one must always say: Adjustment to what? But within certain crude contexts, like those of psychiatry, for example, it may be sufficient to leave it simply at the question, adjusted or not adjusted, a functioning cog or a nonfunctioning cog. But this is of course not sufficient for a deeper understanding of human affairs. Yes?

Mr. Shulsky: Well, wouldn't the philosophic virtue be teachable as well? I mean, couldn't in a certain sense Socrates be teaching virtue?

LS: But Socrates always denies that he teaches virtue. That we must leave—well, we have enough to do to understand this provisional question which is discussed here: What about the crudest and lowest and, in a way, sham form of virtue which is of tremendous

[xx] Strauss appears to be reading from the translation of Paul Shorey published in the Loeb Classical Library series (1930).
[xxi] *Phaedo* 82a11–b1.

practical importance? Because when we speak ordinarily of nice people, I mean, perhaps including ourselves in that, we are not very strict. You know, people who have never been to jail, perhaps never even been before a law court, and some other things; that is compatible with all kinds of deeper diseases, as it is not hard to understand. Good. So Socrates is convinced: he knows now that virtue is teachable. Good. But the question is, of course: What virtue? We shall see later. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Yet I have still one very small difficulty which I am sure that Protagoras will easily explain, as he has already explained so much. (328e)

LS: Yes, "he will teach it fully and explain it fully, in addition to what he had done before." The man who has overcome such difficulty will be able to accomplish a tiny little wee bit. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
If a man were to go and consult Pericles or any of our great speakers about these matters, he might perhaps hear as fine a discourse; but then when one has a question to ask of any of them, like books, they can neither answer nor ask, and if any one challenges the least particular of their speech, they go ringing on in a long harangue, like brazen pots, which when they are struck continue to sound unless some one puts his hand upon them. Whereas— (329a)

LS: You see here Socrates's irony in the sense in which everyone observes it. Fundamentally, Socrates speaks always ironically in the strict sense, that he always speaks with a view to the individual or individuals to whom he speaks. That is the deepest meaning of irony in Plato. But in the crude sense, when we say someone speaks ironically, he of course also does this from time to time, and this is clear irony. Well, only one tiny little bit of a thing which proves to be fatal to the whole thing. And secondly, that [13][Socrates] compels Protagoras by flattering him to give short replies: You are such a terrific man and you claim that—and so on. But in this flattery, there is also a severe criticism: Your show-off speech, which charmed me, belongs to the kind of things which in a pinch even Pericles could have done, someone who does not raise . . . Rhetoric, public speech, books, they belong together, and they all have this quality: that they do not answer questions, answer new questions. But we must not forget of course that laws also are such writings, which need the living human mind in order to become alive, so that laws too are proper. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Whereas our friend Protagoras—

LS: Not "our friend," of course. "This Protagoras here." No, no, they were not so sentimental.

Mr. Reinken:

Whereas Protagoras here can not only make a good long speech, as he has already shown— (329b)

LS: No, "long and beautiful speech."

Mr. Reinken:
long and beautiful speech, as he has already shown, but when he is asked a question he can answer briefly; and when he asks he will wait and hear the answer. And this is a very rare gift. [Laughter] (329b)

LS: Almost like "good doggie." Yes. Now just as Socrates compelled Protagoras to defend his orthodoxy by warning him that the Athenian views might be different, he now compels him to defend his reputation as a short answerer by giving short answers. And you will see, Protagoras will not merely answer questions but he will also raise questions, namely, in case Socrates's questions, for example, were not clear enough, he will ask for the meaning and so on, but perhaps more than that. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Now I, Protagoras, want to ask you a little question, which if you will only answer, I shall be quite satisfied. You were saying that virtue can be taught—that I will take upon your authority, and there is no one to whom I am more ready to trust. (329b-c)

LS: In other words, "And if I ever would believe any human being, I would believe you, I will believe you." So you see now Socrates makes quite clear, contrary to what he had said in 328e, that Protagoras has not convinced him of the teachability of virtue. And he has not convinced him, we can assume, because of that little point which he will bring up now. That is the root of the difficulty. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
But I marvel at one thing about which I should like to have my mind set at rest. You were speaking of Zeus sending justice and reverence to men, and several times while you were speaking—

LS: "And also many times in the speeches." This implies, this means [that] what he said about Zeus was not said in the speeches but in the myth, as we know. The reference is important.

Mr. Reinken:
many times in the *logoi*, in the speeches, justice, and moderation,[xxii] and piety, and all these qualities were described by you as if they could be lumped together into one thing, namely, virtue. Now I want you to tell me exactly whether virtue is one whole, of which justice and moderation and piety are parts; or whether all these are only the names of one and the same thing. That is the doubt which still lingers in my mind. (329c-d)

[xxii] In the translation: "self-control," as also with the second use of "moderation" in the passage.

LS: Now he alludes here at the beginning of this passage to Protagoras's admission in the myth that virtue is of divine origin: that Zeus sent these things; [it is] not due to human agency. And he reminds us of the difference between the myth and the *logos*. He uses here *logoi* because it consists of three parts. In these *logoi* and not in the myth Protagoras had spoken of virtue as one; quite a few times he had done this. Now the little point which he has is this: Is virtue simply one, or does it have parts? Why is this such a terribly important question for reasonable, commonsensical men? I mean, we must not, on the basis of what we know from other Platonic dialogues, if not from histories of philosophy, give an answer to that question. That would be absurd. We must consider the situation in which everyone present is. Would this be the greatest difficulty for anyone who had heard this Protagoras speech?

To make the difficulty quite clear, I will use an extreme expression. I will say that the question of the unity of virtue is at this point a kind of red herring. But nevertheless, the question of the unity of virtue is *the* question in an entirely different way as Socrates states it here. We all must have been impressed by the fact that Protagoras spoke almost all the time of virtue in at least two very different senses: the virtue expected of every human being—man or woman, adult or child, freeman or slave—and on the other hand of the virtue like that of Pericles, the virtue of the great statesman. Well, if we are more precise, we would say there is still an even higher kind of virtue that came to sight for one moment: the virtue of the legislators of old, which is still greater than that of Pericles. Now[14] is this the same virtue or are these different virtues?[15]

Needless to say, this is linked up with the question of the rich and the poor. Are the rich capable of a kind of virtue of which the poor are incapable? Or more importantly, are the gifted ones capable of virtues of which the ungifted ones are not capable? This is the most obvious question when one reads this speech, the long speech. And that is indeed a question of the unity of virtue. Does virtue in the case of any human being mean the same, or are there various levels or kinds of virtue?

Socrates, for reasons which we can perhaps find out, takes the question of the unity of virtue but understands it in this precise sense: Are, for example, justice and piety identical or nonidentical? And that will be the subject of the sequel.

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[1] Deleted "and."
[2] Deleted "then"
[3] Deleted "namely"
[4] Deleted "the."
[5] Deleted "so wide"
[6] Deleted "what"
[7] Deleted "Student: Self-preservation. LS: Pardon?"
[8] Deleted "that's"
[9] Deleted "first, now"
[10] Deleted "Oh, "such like." I misread."
[11] Deleted "knows"
[12] Deleted "it"
[13] Deleted "he"
[14] Deleted "are these all."
[15] Deleted "Needless to say there is"

Session 10: April 28, 1965

The Cross-Examination of Protagoras: Virtue and Its Parts

(329d-335c)

Leo Strauss: [1]You remember the point: only one little difficulty, and Socrates is willing to believe Protagoras, that virtue can be taught. And one can put the question very simply: You have proven that virtue is taught without making clear what virtue is. [It is] the same situation as at the end of the first book of the *Republic*, where Socrates had proven that justice is good without having made clear what justice is. Now the question is not put quite in this technical form—What is justice?—but rather this way: Is justice one (as Protagoras said more than once), or is it many? Because he has spoken of justice, saintliness, and moderation, and "Which is the right view?" Socrates asks. And we come now, if Mr. Reinken is now ready, to 329d3. "But it is easy," says Protagoras, "to answer this question at any rate." In other words, there may be other questions which will be harder to answer.

Mr. Reinken:
[Protag.:] There is no difficulty, Socrates, in answering that the qualities of which you were speaking are the parts of virtue which is one.

LS: Yes. Now Protagoras is in a way relieved—this, at any rate, is easy to answer—that Socrates has not brought into the open the much greater question to which I referred at the end of last meeting, namely, regarding the ambiguity of virtue in his own speech: Is it a virtue which can be expected of every human being, or is it this high-class virtue of which there are various kinds? An easy question, and therefore the answer is easy. Now how does he go on?

Mr. Reinken:
[Soc.:] And are they parts, I said, in the same sense in which mouth, nose, and eyes, and ears, are the parts of a face; or are they like the parts of gold, which differ from the whole and from one another only in being larger or smaller?

I should say that they differed, Socrates, in the first way; they are related to one another as the parts of a face are related to the whole face.

And do some men have one part and some another part of virtue? Or if a man has one part, must he also have all the others? (329d-e)

LS: Now let us stop here. Now the question is: Parts in what sense? Like the parts of the face, or like the parts of gold, parts qualitatively different from one another and the whole, or parts only quantitatively different? Protagoras says: Like the parts of the face. But this has of course a great difficulty which is not brought out by him or by anybody

else. And what is that? If the parts of virtue are related to virtue as such as the parts of the face are related to the face, what difficulty arises immediately?

Student: The whole is the community of the parts.

LS: No, no let us—yes?

Same Student: There is no overriding virtue, then. What is *the* virtue which is like the nose in terms of the face, or the eyes in terms of the face?

LS: Yes, but more simply: Is the nose a face? So in other words, if he is right, the parts of virtue are not virtue, but only all together. Yes. Now if only all virtues together, all so-called virtues together are virtue, then of course it follows that virtue is not taught by the Athenians nor by Protagoras, because Protagoras argues on the opposite assumption, as we see. The alternative view is incompatible, namely, that they should be only quantitatively different, with what we mean by the difference of the virtues. We do not mean that courage is the same, only quantitatively different, from wisdom or something. At any rate, from Protagoras's reply it would follow that one must have all virtues together: a face without a nose or without eyes is not a face.

Socrates omits here a third possibility which he discusses, for example, in the *Statesman* 260[i] (or rather someone else discusses there), namely, that part in the sense of a species, is a part of the genus. For example, let us say the virtues might be related to each other like various geometrical figures: circles, rectangles, and so on. And then in this case it would even be impossible that they could be there at the same time. Still, Socrates limits the alternatives in such a way as to bring Protagoras into a grave difficulty, because, to repeat, if Protagoras's view is right, that the parts of virtue are related to each other like the parts of the face, then one must have all of them together. It is impossible to have only some of them, because a face without a mouth or without any of the other [2]three parts mentioned is not a face; or it is only a very defective one, and therefore it could not be virtue. Good.

This kind of thing never comes out in the translation: when he speaks of the parts of the face, mouth and nose are taken together. So, literally translated, "mouth as well as nose and eyes and ears." So there are three, really, just as we have three virtues. And one can explain it, at least in this sense, that the eyes correspond then to the moderation, which is the central virtue mentioned here. Moderation as defined here in this dialogue has to do with harmony, rhythm, and this kind of thing, with wisdom and beauty. The ears would correspond to piety, and that is clear because piety as he understood rests on tradition, i.e., on what you hear, on what people say. In which sense mouth and nose would correspond to justice is a relatively minor question. Good. Now what does Protagoras say?

Mr. Reinken:

[i] The passage is more likely at *Statesman* 262b–263e. The interlocutors are the Eleatic Stranger and Young Socrates.

By no means, he said; for many a man is courageous and not just, or just and not wise. (329e)

LS: Yes, which is a very popular view, and in itself a statement of a triviality. We note in passing that Protagoras does not say the other way around, that there might be wise men who are unjust, because this would come too close to home, as you will see from the sequel. Yes, and now?

Mr. Reinken:
You would not deny, then, I replied, that courage and wisdom are also parts of virtue?

LS: This is not right. "Are these two parts of virtue, wisdom and courage?" Because he never spoke of them before, that is the point. Hitherto he has only spoken of the three others. Yes, what does he say?

Mr. Reinken:
Most undoubtedly they are, he answered; and wisdom is the most important of the parts. (330a)

LS: Yes. Now, so in other words, he had forgotten the most important virtue, but another one, which is by no means unimportant, courage or manliness. Now in order to give the most telling proof of the truth of his view that the virtues can be possessed separately, he suddenly remembers the two virtues about which he had been completely silent in his long speech. Why had he been silent about them? Because he was speaking there of that kind of virtue which is expected of everyone—men, and women, for example, of whom manliness in any degree is not expected according to the popular view. So we have to say then there are two kinds of virtue: the kinds mentioned in the long speech, justice, moderation and piety; and the other kind is manliness and wisdom. This is a view of some importance. For example, Callicles in the *Gorgias*: the virtues which he praises and which he regards as genuine virtues are only manliness and wisdom, not the other virtues. And this culminates, so to speak, in Machiavelli's teaching. Machiavelli makes a distinction between goodness and virtue, and goodness is exactly the things which Protagoras had meant in his long speech, while virtue, *virtù* in Machiavelli's usage, means manliness and wisdom combined. Incidentally, Rousseau makes the same distinction between virtue and goodness, but it has a very different meaning in his work.

Now this is an old story, we have some other . . . for example, Cicero in the *Offices*, book 1, paragraph 20, says men are called good, *boni viri*, with a view to their justice, not with a view to the other virtues. But the most striking illustration is one which is so obvious that we don't think of it, and that is supplied by Plato's *Republic*. You know what I mean? Mr. Dry?

Mr. Dry: I believe that all men have to share in justice—

LS: And in moderation.

Mr. Dry: Right, and in moderation. But then just one class has courage, and just the one man would have wisdom.

LS: Yes, courage and wisdom are the preserve of the higher groups; these [i.e., justice and moderation], are the ones which are expected from everyone. Protagoras, we see from his answer, thinks very highly of the two forgotten virtues, especially of wisdom. So the various virtues differ from one another not only qualitatively but also in rank. Wisdom is here and the others are much lower. And it is of course here implied in what he said that one can be a wise man (although it is not stated) without being just, moderate, pious, and courageous. Totally separate. That will become quite clear from the immediate sequel. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And they are all different from one another? I said.
Yes.

LS: So that means "although they are separable." That is the point. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And has each of them a distinct function like the parts of the face?

LS: Yes, function—"power" is more literal. Function, that is a modern term, especially as it is now commonly used. Power, faculty. But all right. Each is capable of achieving something special. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
The eye, for example, is not like the ear and has not the same faculty[ii]—

LS: Has the same power, namely, ability. It is hardly necessary to say that the eye provides the power of seeing and the ear provides the power of hearing, and the same would apply to the virtues. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and of the other parts are none is like another, either in their powers,[iii] or in any other way. I want to know whether the comparison holds concerning the parts of virtue. Do they also differ from one another in themselves and in their powers? For that is clearly what the simile would imply. (330a-b)

LS: Yes, "what the comparison would imply." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Yes, Socrates, they are so—

[ii] In the translation: "function"
[iii] The word translated as "powers" in this passage is "functions" in the translation.

LS: Now let us think for one moment about that. Could the different virtues possibly have the same power? Because why does he make this addition of the powers? For instance, moderation could have the same power as justice. I mean, if someone has very small needs and is in no way competitive, that would be implied in moderation in a certain sense: he would act like the just man but not *as* the just man, because the just man would do it for other reasons—for the common good, and so on. One or the other virtue may therefore be superfluous for people who have a certain other virtue. That is implied, if another virtue has this power. Now?

Mr. Reinken:
Then, I said, no other part of virtue is like knowledge, or like justice, or like courage, or like self-control, or like holiness?
No, he answered. (330b)

LS: Now he enumerates here five virtues, as you see, because the number has been enlarged by Protagoras, adding the two. And you see what he does here: Which is the central virtue?

Student: Courage.

LS: Courage. Yes, you will see that this will become easily intelligible, because in the following discussion courage will not be taken up. But courage becomes *the* theme toward the end. And he replaces wisdom by knowledge, or *episteme*, which is the origin of our word for science. One can also count differently and say there are two new virtues here added, knowledge and courage, and in between them is justice. They surround justice. And this is more helpful for understanding the immediate sequel. Yes.

So the thesis is perfectly clear. There are five independent virtues, and a man can possess one or two or all of them without having or possessing the other [ones]. There is no difference. Now the argument begins. Are the virtues truly separate? Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Well, then, I said, suppose that you and I inquire into the particular nature of each. And first, you would agree with me that justice is some particular thing, is it not? (330c)

LS: No, that is not good. "Justice is some thing or is it no thing?" *Pragma* in Greek, corresponding to the Latin *res* in the original meaning, meaning such a thing, not necessarily a tangible thing but also an affair. An affair. As we say, *res publica*, the common affairs, or the thing like a chair or something of this kind. Let us read. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
That is my opinion: would it not be yours also?
Mine also, he said. (330c)

LS: Yes, but still, justice is a thing. What else could it be? Why does he make that point? Yes?

Student: Because there would be no such thing as justice.

LS: But what would it be, then?

Student: It would be a fiction by which you could persuade people to be just.

LS: But still it would be something; otherwise you couldn't even make this remark.

Student: Well, justice could not be—justice, when we think of it as a thing, we think of it as something good.

LS: Well, if we read on a few lines, and I do not wish to pretend to a kind of wisdom I do not have, we would get the answer. It could be a mere name; that is the opposite here. Is justice a thing, or is it a mere name? That comes out in the sequel.

You see also what Socrates does here. He as it were dictates the answers to Protagoras. He says: That is my opinion, what about you? Now why does he do that? Ordinarily Socrates does not do that, but we are not in an ordinary situation. Why do we engage in this whole business here?

Student: Well, I suppose he doesn't want Protagoras just to make a silly mistake that would require Socrates to do something insulting that would hinder the progress of the argument.

LS: Yes, but something very simple: What is the peculiar situation in this dialogue which we do not have in the same way elsewhere?

Student: You mean Hippocrates?

LS: Hippocrates, sure. And he must be prevented from carrying away in his soul unhealthy food, and therefore Socrates interferes much more than he otherwise would. Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And suppose that some one were to ask us, saying, "O Protagoras, and you, Socrates, what about this thing which you were calling justice—" (330c)

LS: Yes, "which you have just named." So the contrast to name is quite clear.

Mr. Reinken:
"you have just named justice, is it just or unjust?" (330c)

LS: Now we see here again another dialogue within the dialogue, by which Socrates achieves that he is in the same boat as Protagoras. He also is cross-examined, but of course here the third party which addresses both of them through the mouth of Socrates is

also a warner, because that has to do with the subject under discussion, as we will gradually see, because the subject will be justice and piety and Protagoras was not very sound in this respect. Yes, good. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken: Do you use "piety" for *hosion*?

LS: Yes. Well, since he uses *hosiotēs* all the time, I think we can translate it here in this context as we like, because there is no difference here intended between *hosiotēs* and *eusebia*. You know? He translates it—the Loeb translator translates it "saintliness," which of course is a bit too much, because by "saintliness" we understand a high degree of piety.

Mr. Reinken: Or holiness.

LS: Well, holiness also would be—a man is pious in the ordinary sense if he fulfills his religious obligation, as is expected of everyone. He would not by doing this become saintly or holy. So we can here translate it as we want, because the question does not come up. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
"What you have named justice, is it just or unjust?" and I were to answer, just. How would you vote, with me or against me? (330c)

LS: We see again, he really guides him. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
With you, he said.
Thereupon I should answer to him who asked me, that justice is of the nature of the just. Would not you? (330c-d)

LS: Well, no, more simply: "Justice is something like being just," and therefore how should not justice be just? Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
that justice is just. Would not you?
Yes, he said.
And suppose that he went on to say: "Well now, is there also such a thing as piety?" (330d)

LS: Yes, more literally, "is there not some sort of piety?" *Hosiotēta tina*. It is more qualified.

Mr. Reinken:
"some sort of piety?" we should answer, "Yes," if I am not mistaken?
Yes, he said.
Which you would also acknowledge to be a thing—should we not say so?

He assented. (330d)

LS: Now the question regarding piety is slightly more elaborate than the question regarding justice, as you see. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
"And is this sort of thing which is pious or impious?"

LS: No. Now before, let me see: "You say that this is also a thing, we would affirm it, or not." And then how does he go on?

Mr. Reinken:
"He assented."

LS: You see, Socrates suddenly drops here the direct speech and falls into indirect speech—a tiny little change which is very meaningful, as will appear later. Very simply, how could he have expressed his agreement? There are many ways in which you can agree: you can say "yes," and you can say, "of course," and so on and so on, but you can also just nod or express your agreement by any other silent sign. This we do not know. Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
"Is it pious or impious?" I should be angry at his putting such a question, and should say, "Peace man; nothing—" (330d-e)

LS: More than that: use decent language, use reverent language, *euphēmei*. *Bita linguis*.

Mr. Reinken: Bite your tongue?

LS: Yes.

Mr. Reinken:
"nothing can be pious if piety is not pious." What would you say? Would you not answer in the same way?
Certainly, he said. (330e)

LS: Yes, good. So it is not clear whether Protagoras, in contradistinction to Socrates, would have become indignant. It is very rare that Socrates becomes indignant or at least says: I would be indignant. But otherwise, there is perfect agreement between the two men: justice is just, piety is pious. What these seemingly trivial things mean will become a bit clearer from the sequel. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And then after this suppose that he came and asked us, "What were you saying just now? Perhaps I may not have heard you rightly, but you seemed to me to be saying that the parts of virtue in their mutual relation were not the same as one another." I should reply,

"You certainly heard that said, but not, as you imagine, by me; for I only asked the question; Protagoras gave the answer." And suppose that he turned to you and said, "Is this true, Protagoras? And do you maintain that one part of virtue is unlike another, and is this your position?" How would you answer him?
I could not help acknowledging the truth of what he said, Socrates. (330e-331a)

LS: Socrates, in other words, finishes now the situation where they are both in the same boat. He emphasizes the disagreement in spite of the agreement which was emphasized before. Yes. Now Protagoras has now to defend the thesis that while justice is just, it isn't pious; and while piety is pious, it isn't just. You see that these seemingly verbal things are rich in nonverbal meanings. You will not know that for Protagoras piety was a very questionable thing. He began a book with the words, "whether the gods are, or are not, I do not know; the abstruseness of the subject and the brevity of my life" (he lived until he was almost seventy) "prevent me from knowing the truth about it."[iv] And the book was burned then in Athens and he was expelled because of his impiety. So this was of course known to Plato when he wrote that, even if it wasn't known to Socrates at the time of this discussion. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Well, then, Protagoras, we will assume this. And now supposing that he proceeded to say further, "Then piety is not of the nature of a just thing—" (331a)

LS: Yes, "if he were to ask us"—you see, Socrates does not completely sever his relation with Protagoras. "If he were to ask us, in addition." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
"nor justice of the nature of a pious thing, but of the nature of impious thing; and piety is of the nature of the not just, and therefore of the unjust, and the unjust is the impious." How shall we answer him? I should certainly answer him on my own behalf that justice is pious, and that piety is just; and I would say in like manner on your behalf also, if you would allow me, that justice is either the same with piety, or very nearly the same; and above all I would assert that justice is like piety and piety is like justice. And I wish that you would tell me whether I may be permitted to give this answer on your behalf—(331a-b)

LS: Yes, you see he tries to build a golden bridge for Protagoras. Socrates would say that justice is pious and piety is just, which would not necessarily mean that justice is identical with piety. For instance, a man may be pious in the sense of worshiping the gods by being just, but also by sacrificing and praying, which are not implied in justice. And it may also be [that] one is just by giving every being its due, and hence by worshiping the gods. Here piety would appear as a subdivision of justice, but a subdivision of something is of course not the same as that broader whole.

Now his proposal to Protagoras also leaves open the possibility that the two virtues are not identical. He says they may be only very similar. Now you must have observed the

[iv] See Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, 1.23, and Diogenes Laertius 9.51–52.

fallacious conclusion of Socrates [that] if justice is not pious, it is impious; and vice versa, piety would be unjust. Still, we must not in this discussion forget one crucial distinction which comes out more clearly in the Platonic dialogue *Euthyphro* [between] two meanings of piety: doing what the gods tell men to do through their priests, oracles, etc.; and doing what the gods do, i.e., imitating the gods. Now the latter would of course mean to imitate Zeus's adulteries, so here it is perfectly clear that justice and piety would be two very different things. [3]This question is a very grave question, as is clear. So Socrates has offered Protagoras a fine way out. Now let us see what Protagoras in his wisdom chooses. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
He replied: This matter does not seem to be quite so simple, Socrates, that I can agree to the proposition that justice is pious and that piety is just, for there appears to me to be a difference between them. (331c)

LS: A very wise answer, as I believe I have shown, because the point of view would be different in any case. Socrates's proposal goes too far for Protagoras. The difference between piety and justice is such as to preclude saying that justice is pious and piety is just. This cannot be so simple. Now how does he go on, Protagoras?

Mr. Reinken:
But what matter? If you please, I please; and let us assume, if you will, that justice is pious and that piety is just. (331c)

LS: In other words, the matter is not important enough to quarrel about it: Have it your way, Socrates. But that is not what Socrates wishes, as we see from the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
Pardon me, I replied; I do not want this "if you please" or "if you like" sort of proposition to be put to the test, but I want you and me to be tested. I mean to say that the proposition will be best tested, if you take the "if" out of it. (331c)

LS: In other words, Socrates demands that Protagoras speak up, that he identify himself with the thesis, with the *logos*. We shall see later on that Socrates is not of the opinion that one cannot discuss a thesis even if the man who maintains it does not believe in it; of course that is possible. But Socrates has to think of something else here, of somebody else: our young friend Hippocrates. Hippocrates must know somehow where Protagoras stands, and therefore it is important to know what Protagoras says and not merely which thesis he maintains for argument's sake. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Well, he said, I admit that justice bears a resemblance to piety, for there is always some point of view in which everything is like every other thing; white is in a certain way like black, and hard is like soft, and the most extreme opposites have some qualities in common. Even the parts of the face which, as we were saying before, are distinct and

have different powers,[v] are still in a certain point of view similar, and one of them is like another of them. And you may prove, if you please, on the same principle that all things are like one another. And yet things which are alike in some particular ought not to be called alike— (331d-e)

LS: More literally, "it is not just to call things which have some similarity similar, nor those which have some dissimilarity dissimilar when the similarity is only very small." Now you see Protagoras accepts here Socrates's identification of justice and piety in the sense that they have a certain similarity. But, he adds, even the most opposite things have a certain similarity: black and white are similar insofar as they are colors. Now the implication: the similarity between justice and piety could be negligibly small for all practical purposes and they still would have something in common, because they are praised. Surely this statement is astonishing, as Socrates says in the sequel. A man may be pious without being just, and a man may be just without being pious; this surely follows from Protagoras's general assertion. Now this somewhat difficult sentence at the end of the passage read: "one must not call dissimilar things, like justice and piety—one must not call them dissimilar if they have some resemblance, however small." Now what does Socrates say? "And I having fallen into wonder, or maybe amazed." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And do you think, I said in a tone of surprise, that justice—

LS: No, not "a tone"; that is wrong. Socrates says here simply—he presents himself as being genuinely surprised.

Mr. Reinken:
And I, in wonder, said, do you think that justice and piety have but a small degree of likeness?
Certainly not; any more than I agree with what I understand to be your view. (331e)

LS: In other words, they have some similarity but not such a great one as you say, nor are they altogether dissimilar. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Well, I said, as you appear to be unhappy about this, let us take another of the examples which you mentioned instead.

LS: Yes, good. Protagoras obviously doesn't like the discussion of this subject (this should be clear), the difference between justice and piety; and Socrates, being an obliging man, drops the subject. Protagoras's caution, of which he spoke in the same context in which he spoke of his candor, is obviously not good enough, because at the first test he is not cautious enough, as we see. Now this was the discussion of piety and justice, and nothing has been proven about their identity; the utmost is that they have some similarity, some resemblance, which of course means they are not identical. Yes?

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[v] In the translation: "different functions."

Student: Could Protagoras not have agreed with what Socrates said and still maintain that there is a similarity but they're not the same? Socrates said that justice is pious; he did not say justice is piety—and the reverse, so that the example of worshiping would allow that sort of—

LS: Yes, but that would mean that if justice is pious, by complying with the requirements of piety you act justly.

Same Student: I was thinking that pious would be somehow the act that would fall into that description but it would not be piety. The act of worshiping—

LS: Yes, that is clear. The question would be, what about worshiping the gods? In other words, it could mean that by acting justly toward human beings we do the will of the gods. That is piety. But then there is this big other subject of sacrifice and prayer, which is left out. I spoke of that, that the point of view of piety is not the point of view of justice. But this would be compatible, that the subject matter, so to speak, is the same in both cases. But it could be because worshiping the gods could simply be an act of gratitude toward the gods, and gratitude falls under the heading of justice. So that could be, but this is of course not what Protagoras has in mind: Protagoras has private notions about the difference between justice and piety, generally being that the reasonableness of justice is more evident than the reasonableness of piety. It amounts to that. Mr. Reading?

Mr. Reading: Protagoras is internationally famous and one of the most of the internationally famous sophists, and Socrates at the very most is a local notable.

LS: Yes.

Mr. Reading: Why does Protagoras let Socrates initiate, guide, and lead the discussion when he didn't like the conversation at that point? Why doesn't he stop it and appeal to the crowd and not Socrates?

LS: Yes. But still he has no idea what serpents he has to deal with. I mean, he knows that Socrates is a very clever young man, but that he could lick him, that never occurred to him. That is a great experience which he will make soon afterward, and hitherto he regards him—well, he annoys him a bit, you see, but he can always take care of him. More is needed. Protagoras doesn't know what kind of a fellow Socrates is. And of course, in addition, he cannot easily jump out; he has to think of his reputation. He must not, by jumping out at the improper place, damage his reputation. Here is that boy Hippocrates with lots of money who wants to become his student. [4]Without the presence of Hippocrates, we cannot understand the dialogue on the highest and on the lowest level. So Socrates leaves it off here, and everyone can draw his own conclusion what Protagoras thinks about piety, but now he turns to another subject, where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
Do you admit the existence of folly?
I do.

And is not wisdom the very opposite of folly?
That is true, he said.
And when men act rightly and advantageously— (332a)

LS: Now wait a moment. Now a new subject begins. I think I should draw the plan. [LS goes to the blackboard]

Mr. Reinken: The chalk is in the drawer. [The sound of opening and closing drawers follows.]

LS: You have no idea how many thieves there are. There was a time when I took it home after each [class]. [Laughter] Let us enumerate the virtues. Yes, he mentions piety, justice. [LS writes on the blackboard.] Now hitherto he has proven in a way that piety is identical with justice. Now we come to wisdom and moderation, and he proves their identity; and then he turns to moderation and proves its identity with justice; and then of course this goes back . . . with justice. Then of course [5]all four virtues are identical. The only one which is dropped here for the time being is courage, and we will see later why this is the case. So this is one thing [LS writes on the blackboard] and this would be perfectly compatible, the second stage, with the fact that piety and justice are identical but have nothing in common with wisdom and moderation. And then only in the last stage are these [LS writes on the blackboard] two united. That is Socrates's plan.

Now there is one difficulty here, [a] verbal [one], and that has to do with the Greek term which I translate by moderation, *sōphrosynē*, which has a very great range of meaning. And I suggest that for our present purpose we can translate it by something like "being sensible." Being sensible. You can easily see that moderation can be said to be "being sensible." I mean, this is easily understood, for example: Be sensible, don't drink too much, and so on. But of course it is not quite the same as wisdom, because in the case of wisdom, we think also of theoretical wisdom, and of great abilities, and this kind of thing. That is clear. But we cannot follow this somewhat sophistical argument of Socrates if we do not translate properly. So I would put it this way. I would say: Is there such a thing as senselessness? And its opposite is wisdom. The senseless men are the lowest men and the wise men are at the top. Sure. Now where were we? In 320, 330?

Mr. Reinken:
Is wisdom the opposite of folly?
That is true. (332a)

LS: 332a6. Yes. Good. "Now when men act correctly as well as usefully." Do you have that?

Mr. Reinken:
rightly and advantageously, do they seem to you to be sensible, or not?

LS: Or "to act sensibly."

Mr. Reinken:
act sensibly or not?
Yes, he said.
And *sōphrosynē*, being sensible makes them sensible?
Certainly.
And they who do not act rightly act foolishly, and in acting thus are not sensible?
I agree, he said.
Then to act foolishly is the opposite of acting sensibly?[vi] (332a-b)

LS: "To act senselessly is the opposite." Yes? So by acting correctly and usefully, men act sensibly. Hence, if acting justly and piously is acting correctly and usefully, it would follow that justice and piety are forms of being sensible, are forms of *sōphrosynē*. Is this not obvious? In other words, here is the first time that we get something more than the merely verbal, because acting sensibly is now said to be acting correctly and usefully. Here we get a somewhat more complete notion. You must also see here again the transition to indirect speech: that Socrates does no longer report what Protagoras literally said, but he says he agreed—and which I said could mean silent nodding or some other expression of the face without any words. Good. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:
He assented.
And senseless actions are done by senselessness, and sensible actions by sensibleness?
He agreed.
And that is done strongly which is done by strength, and that which is weakly done, by weakness?
He assented.
And that which is done with swiftness is done swiftly, and that which is done with slowness, slowly?
He assented again. (332b)

LS: Yes. Now in other words, he uses[6] these examples: senselessness and sensibility, if I may say, are opposites of the same character as, say, quickness and slowness, and strength and weakness. Now if you take this literally, the comparison of *sōphrosynē*, of sensibility, with slowness—in the dialogue *Charmides*, the first definition of sensibility, of moderation, however we may call it, is acting slowly—you know, not rashly. Now it would of course have the great implication that *sōphrosynē* is also coordinated with weakness, in contradistinction [LS laughs] to strength. Now let us see whether Socrates divines something of Protagoras by that.

Mr. Reinken:
And that which is done in the same way, is done by the same: and that which is done in opposite ways by opposites?
He agreed.
Once more, I said, is there anything beautiful?
Yes.

[vi] "Sensible" and "sensibly" are rendered in the translation as "self-controlled."

To which the only opposite is the ugly?
There is no other.
And is there anything good?
There is.
To which the only opposite is the evil?
There is no other.
And there is the high in tone?
True.
To which the only opposite is the low?
There is no other, he said, but that.
Then every opposite has one opposite only and no more?
He assented. (332c)

LS: Yes, you see now he speaks explicitly of the beautiful or noble and the good, about which he had been silent in the discussion of piety and justice. Now we have here altogether five examples: strength, quickness, the beautiful or noble, the good, and the shrill. The noble, which is in the center, is here taken to be different from the good. Otherwise it wouldn't make sense to say the noble, the opposite is the base; the good, the opposite is the bad. But if there is such a fundamental distinction between the noble or beautiful and the good, there might be a variety of virtues on that very basis: virtue as related to the noble, virtue as related to the good. We must keep this in mind. The main point: everything which has opposites has only one opposite. The whole argument hinges on this principle. Now is this a true principle? Protagoras accepts it. Yes?

Mr. Shulsky: Well, [7]to take one of the examples he uses, something which isn't noble need not be base: it could be more or less totally indifferent to nobility, or not, so that you would you say that the opposite of the noble is the base, and the opposite of the noble could also be whatever isn't noble, the ordinary.

LS: The logicians distinguish between the contrary and the contradictory, say, good, the contrary is bad, the contradictory is non-good, which may be something absolutely different. Yes? That is one way of settling that. But one could also say: Is it true of the humanly relevant things that there is only one opposite? Yes?

Student: Well, if you go back to the discussion of virtues in the *Ethics*—take courage. Courage has two extremes, rashness and cowardice. And the mean is courage, which is the opposite of each extreme. But each extreme is the opposite of itself and the other, so rashness is the opposite of cowardice, but is also the opposite of courage, as is—

LS: What you say is very right except that you said "if we go back."

Same Student: I was thinking of fall quarter— [Laughter]

LS: Yes, but you cannot suppose that these people who listened to that had read the *Nicomachean Ethics*. But the question is whether Plato himself did not recognize that,

say, foolhardiness is an opposite of courage as well as cowardice. And he does this and we can prove this from the *Laches*, so that is not a necessary principle. Now let us—yes?

Student: If, however, there was such a one thing as virtue, then either a person would participate in this virtue or he would not, and this would be either a yes or a no.

LS: Give an example. I don't follow you.

Same Student: I think here Socrates is saying there is one thing, that virtue is one reality in which one cannot be moderate without being wise, without being just, because it all refers to one reality.

LS: Yes, but he tries to establish that. I mean, to begin with, we mean something different by *sōphrosynē*, by moderation and by wisdom. And Socrates tries to prove that identity. The argument is roughly this: folly or senselessness, as I said, is an opposite of wisdom, but it is also the opposite of moderation. But one opposite can only have one other opposite; hence, moderation must be identical with wisdom. That is the simple argument, which is based on a number of difficulties. Now let us first read the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
Then every opposite has one opposite only and no more.
He assented.
Then now, I said, let us recapitulate our admissions. First of all—

LS: Because we are already through, in a way. Yes?[vii]

Mr. Reinken: Then now, I said, let us recapitulate our admissions. First of all, we admitted that everything has one opposite and not more than one?
We did so.
And we admitted also that what was done in opposite ways was done by opposites?
Yes.
And that which was done senselessly, as we further admitted, was done in the opposite way to that which was done sensibly?
Yes.
And that which was done sensibly was done by sensibility, and that which was done senselessly by senselessness?
He agreed.
And that which is done in opposite ways is done by opposites?
Yes.
And one thing is done by sensibility, and quite another thing by senselessness?
Yes.
And in opposite ways?
Certainly.
And therefore by opposites?
Yes.

[vii] The tape was changed at this point.

Then senselessness is the opposite of sensibility?
Clearly.
And do you remember that senselessness has already been acknowledged by us to be the opposite of wisdom?[viii]
He assented. (332d-e)

LS: He doesn't give Protagoras's answer because he, [Protagoras], is silent apparently, now. Yes?

Student: Well, senselessness is the opposite of many things, not just one thing, but several things here. Is that what you're saying?

LS: No, no, what he is trying to show is, on the contrary, that senselessness is the opposite of wisdom: senselessness is the opposite of being sensible. But one thing, one opposite can have only one other opposite; hence, wisdom must be identical with sensibility. That's how it is. But we must first read this through. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And we said that everything has only one opposite?
Yes.
Then, Protagoras, which of the two assertions shall we renounce? One says that everything has but one opposite; the other that wisdom is distinct from sensibility, and that both of them are parts of virtue; and that they are not only distinct, but dissimilar, both in themselves and in their powers, like the parts of a face. Which of these two assertions shall we renounce? For both of them together are certainly not in harmony; they do not accord or agree: for how can they be said to agree if everything can have only one opposite and not more than one, and yet senselessness, which is one, clearly has two opposites—wisdom and sensibility?[ix] Is not that true, Protagoras? What else would you say?
He assented, but with great reluctance.
Then sensibility and wisdom are the same, as before justice and piety appeared to us to be nearly the same. (333a-b)

LS: So in other words, he had already made great headway in proving their identity. Now let us consider that. The argument is very simple. There are two contradictory assumptions: first, that moderation or sensibility is different from wisdom; and the other, that one thing has only one opposite. Let us not go into any details, but what follows? Assuming that this is a fair analysis of the situation, what follows from that, when we have two contradictory assumptions? Yes?

Mr. Shulsky: Well, both can't be true, but of course either one can be true.

LS: Aha. And what does Socrates do?

[viii] "Senseless" is translated as "foolish," "sensibility" as "self-control."
[ix] "Senseless" is translated as "foolish" or "folly," "sensibility" as "self-control," and "powers" as "functions" throughout.

Mr. Shulsky: Well, he sort of assumes—I mean, he says: Which shall we give up? And then says: Well, we'll give up the hypothesis that they're different.

LS: In other words, Socrates picks arbitrarily one of the two; that he does here very frequently. Yes? And of course, either you are a nice man, then you have respect for Socrates's wisdom and say, that has to be, or you are nasty or critical; then you want to have reasons from Socrates why he did it. [8]That is the question.

Protagoras's opposition was here in this section less marked than when we discussed piety and justice. The identification of wisdom and moderation is not as repulsive to him as the identification of justice and piety. Clearly, Protagoras is caught with the contradiction and he is unable to extricate himself from it. Now this is of course of the utmost importance, because he who claims to teach virtue is shown not to know what virtue is. He is compromised in the eyes of Hippocrates because he won't understand any fallacy, probably, but he sees whether this great personality is embarrassed or not embarrassed, because no great profundity of understanding is required for observing such things. Good. So Socrates has done quite a bit to prevent any harmful influence of Protagoras on Hippocrates. Mr. Shulsky was first.

Mr. Shulsky: Well, pretty much everything, all the elements of the trap are ready before Socrates says, Then we admit that something can have only one opposite because—well, I mean, the main part is that he's already said that senselessness is the opposite of being sensible, being moderate, and senselessness is also the opposite of wisdom, so that Protagoras certainly must have seen what was happening.

LS: Apparently not. Apparently not—that was not his forte, to foresee this kind of thing. Of course he could very well have said this: You don't make clear what you understand by moderation, *sōphrosynē*. I understand by moderation, in the first place, self-control regarding food, drink, and sex, and I don't see any impossibility for a man being wise and at the same time lack *sōphrosynē*. I mean, there are mathematicians or physicists and whatnot who are not outstanding in self-control in these matters. But you see, he is, after all, just as Gorgias in the *Gorgias*, he is under kind of a compulsion to give short answers in order to show that he is very good not only at long speeches but at short speeches as well. This is a comedy here, a part of the comedy here. Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken: I am still quite unhappy with Protagoras in not giving up the logical branch of the dilemma, the "one opposite" principle. I should think he—why does he lose less face by giving up on the thesis he was maintaining instead of this rash inductive assumption?

LS: You mean regarding the only one opposite?

Mr. Reinken: Yes.

LS: Well, you must not forget, Protagoras is a man filled with his sense of importance, and this is a very dangerous thing, especially if you have to do with a man who lacks it. Well, take a very big dog and a very small puppy who barks at him. He doesn't take that so very seriously, only when the small dog (not a small puppy) proves to be a very good fighter. That takes some time, perhaps, until it comes in. Now similar situations arise among human beings, and Protagoras has not yet awakened to the situation. When he does, he will act and will hit back, as we will see soon. Good. Now where were we now? Now we come to the next point.

Mr. Reinken:
And now, Protagoras, I said, we must finish the enquiry, and not give up. (333b)

LS: Yes, "let us not get tired," "let us not get lazy," but consider also the other things, the remaining things. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:
Do you think that an unjust man can be moderate— (333b)

LS: No, "can be sensible," "can act sensibly." Yes. He uses here the word *anthrōpo*s: human being in general, not an *anēr,* an *hombre*, making us wonder whether an *hombre* might very well act sensibly by being unjust, acting unjustly—you know, a Callicles type. But this is of course in no way elaborated. Yes. Good.

Mr. Reinken:
Do you think that an unjust person can be sensible[x] in his injustice?
I should be ashamed, Socrates, he said, to acknowledge this, which nevertheless many may be found to assert.
And shall I argue with them or with you? I replied.
I would rather, he said, that you should argue with the many first, if you will.
It makes no difference to me, if you will only answer me, and say— (333b-c)

LS: Well, let us stop here for the moment. Now Protagoras does not deny that injustice and moderation, or however you call it, can go together. Nor does he assert it, you see, because that he is ashamed to say so does not necessarily mean that he doesn't think so. Now this is very strange here. Socrates puts a choice before Protagoras: Which thesis shall I discuss, you see, the thesis of the many, which says you can be unjust and moderate at the same time, or Protagoras's shamefaced view that they cannot go together? Now Socrates here would have questioned the thesis that justice and moderation are inseparable if Protagoras had asserted it: Against which of the two assertions shall I speak? This is not extraordinary. So little is Socrates concerned with simply getting Protagoras to agree to his thesis of the unity of the virtues—his concern is rather with testing Protagoras. It can be done either way, and that in the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:

[x] In the translation: "self controlled."

It makes no difference to me, if you will only answer me and say whether you are of their opinion or not. My object is to test the validity of the argument, and yet the result may be that I who ask and the respondent[xi] will both be tested. (333c)

LS: You see the delicacy of Socrates. He doesn't say: I who ask and you the respondent. He omits the "you." He is extremely polite. Socrates no longer demands that Protagoras identify himself with the *logos*, with the assertion to be examined, as he did in 331c. It is clear enough now where Protagoras stands on the present issue. Of course, it is clear that he thinks that you can be unjust while being sensible—I mean, only simple shame prevents him from saying so.

Protagoras is again confronted with a choice here, as twice before. This time he seems to choose wisely, for by agreeing[xii] with the common view, the popular view, he would concede defeat. If he were to grant that justice and moderation are inseparable, he would just say [that] Socrates is right, would he not? He must at least continue the fight, is this not clear? In one point he was licked, clearly; in the other he was almost licked, in the first. Now if he would now say [that] you cannot be just without being moderate, he would admit it in a third case, and that would be the end of it. But he wishes to continue the fight because [there is] still some fight left in him. Now let us see.

Mr. Reinken:
Protagoras at first played coy and said that the argument was not encouraging. (333d)

LS: You see, his resistance now is greater than his resistance had ever been before. What is at issue, to which he is so resistant?

Mr. Reinken: Is it sensible to be unjust.

LS: Yes. But we get a more precise admission.

Mr. Reinken:
At length, he consented to answer.
Now then, I said, begin at the beginning and answer me. You think that some men are sensible, and yet unjust?
Yes, he said, let that be admitted. (333d)

LS: Yes, all right, because he did not identify himself with that. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And sensibility is good sense?
Yes.
And good sense is good counsel in doing injustice?
Granted.
If they do well, I said, or if they do not do well?

[xi] In the translation: "you who answer"
[xii] Strauss says "disagreeing," evidently a misstatement.

If they do well.
And you would admit to the existence of goods? (333d)

LS: "There are some goods," yes. Now let us stop here for one moment. Now what is the issue? The issue is whether one can do well by committing unjust acts. Well, if we use our own sense and use the word "doing well" in the common sense of the word, namely, getting rich, having a yacht and all the other paraphernalia by committing unjust acts, there is some evidence [LS laughs] for that, yes? [Laughter] This is a great problem of Callicles also in the *Gorgias*.

Protagoras admits that being good at counseling may lead to injustice. But may I ask what is he doing to his pupils? He is teaching them good counsel, being well advised. Now if this is so, he is manifestly a teacher of injustice—not necessarily only of injustice; in some cases he would advise of course justice, but also of injustice. Now the good things with which being well advised and so on is concerned best belongs to the essence of moderation as here understood, and hence also of wisdom, because wisdom and moderation have been identified. A wise man in the loose sense of the word is a man who can take care of his own interest by picking what is good for him and avoiding what is bad for him. These considerations were absent in the discussion of justice and piety. This will come out later on. That is important. Now?

Mr. Reinken:
there are good things?
Yes.
And is the good that which is advantageous for man?
Yes, by Zeus,[xiii] he said— (333d-e)

LS: Yes. Now this is good that you bring out the oath, because that is a very rare occurrence in this dialogue. It is the first oath after the Hippocrates scene, where Hippocrates had sworn five times and Socrates twice. But in the whole of what happened since, not a single oath. Now when do people swear? And therefore in particular [when] does Protagoras swear? Pardon?

Student: To emphasize.

LS: Yes, in a state of passion, true or feigned. True or feigned. Sure. Well, to use the simplest example, one doesn't use oaths in proving a mathematical theory, but in political debate oaths occur quite frequently. They are two opposite poles. Although Hobbes succeeded in swearing when he discovered [LS laughs] Euclid—you remember this story? When Hobbes, a man in the forties, read Euclid in a bookstore and then he saw a theorem which sounded (which one it was, I forget) very funny. And then he looked through the demonstration and then he said, "By God, it is so."[xiv] [LS laughs] That was one of the rare cases where oaths were used in connection with Euclid. This is indeed very funny. Good. I have said this about the oath. Protagoras becomes now passionate.

[xiii] In the translation: "Yes, indeed."
[xiv] The anecdote is taken from John Aubrey's portrait of Hobbes in *Brief Lives*.

All the things which have been building up all the time when this small dog had been barking at him and annoying him, now the moment has come where he must hit back. And this will come very soon. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and there are some things which may not be advantageous, and yet I call them good.
I thought that Protagoras was getting ruffled and excited; he seemed to be marshalling his powers for a retort. Seeing this, I minded my business, and gently said: When you say, Protagoras, that things not advantageous are good— (333e-334a)

LS: You see, Socrates acts very sensitively. The big dog is now becoming dangerous. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
that things not advantageous are good, do you mean not advantageous for man only, or not advantageous altogether? And do you call the latter good?

LS: In other words, can you sensibly call something advantageous or useful which is not useful to anybody, to any being, man or non-man? Protagoras is now in his element again. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Certainly not the last, he replied, for I know of many things—meats, drinks, medicines, and ten thousand other things which are not advantageous for man, and some which are advantageous; and some which are neither advantageous nor disadvantageous for man, but only for horses; and some for oxen only and some for dogs; and some for no animals, but only for trees, and some for the roots— (333e-334a)

LS: No, no, wait a moment. So up to this point, in other words, the useful differs just as the species differ. Yes? That is up to this point. That is perfectly reasonable. Dog food is not human food. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and some for the roots of trees and not for their branches, as for example, manure, which is—

LS: Now wait a moment. [Laughter] Now here he goes within the species; that's the interesting thing. Something may be good because that is a part of the species in one sense, like the root of the trees, and the good things differ within the species. Now from here on one could go on to say that the good things differ from individuals of a species to the individuals, and in particular that justice may be advantageous for some sorts of human beings and disadvantageous for others—the argument developed by Glaucon in the second book of the *Republic* and so on and so on. But this Protagoras will not do; he will not go to these lengths, as we will see. Yes. Now when he begins to speak of the dung.

Mr. Reinken:
which is a good thing when laid about the roots of any plant, but utterly destructive if thrown upon the shoots and young branches. Or I may instance olive oil, which is mischievous to all plants, and generally most injurious to the hair of every animal with the exception of man, but beneficial to human hair and to the human body generally. And even in this application (so various and changeable is the nature of the benefit), that which is the greatest good to the exterior of the human body is a very great evil to its interior, and for this reason physicians always forbid their patients the use of oil in their food, except in very small quantities, just enough to extinguish the disagreeable sensation of smell in meats and sauces. (334b-c)

LS: Yes. Now the main thesis is [that] the good is multicolored, to translate literally. Multicolored. And that of course is in obvious opposition to Plato: *the* good is one, which he develops in the *Republic*. But we do not have to go there, to such heights now. Let us consider some example, dung. This most ill-smelling thing, this ugliest thing (ugly in the wider sense of the word) may be good. [9]But since the ugly has also the sense of morally ugly, the implication is clear. Oil, this adorning thing, may be bad; the noble may be bad. Ill-smelling things may be bad for the interior man while they would be good for the exterior man, but the interior man is somehow more important.

This is the end of the discussion, as we shall see soon, and we can say this one point: thanks to Protagoras's outbreak—you know, he refuses now to say yes or no; he makes a long speech—the identity of justice and moderation has not been proven and the whole question is still open. Good. But this of course we can say only by having read on for a few more lines, which I have done and perhaps some of you; and we will now read on as soon as Mr. Reinken is ready.

Mr. Reinken:
When he had given this answer, the company cheered him. (334c)

LS: Yes, "in praising him." So in other words, by one little move Protagoras has completely recovered the whole lost ground. [10]He didn't cut too good a figure in these little question–answer things, but in the moment he was free to make a long speech, he won gloriously. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And I said: Protagoras, I have a wretched memory [laughter], and when any one makes a long speech to me I never remember what he is talking about. [Laughter] As then, if I had been deaf, and you were going to converse with me— (334c-d)

LS: Not quite "deaf," but "hard of hearing."

Mr. Reinken:
and you were going to converse with me, you would have had to raise your voice, so now, having such a bad memory, I will ask you to cut your answers shorter, if you would take me with you.

LS: You see, now Socrates is corresponding to Protagoras's victory with Socrates's discomfiture. He is reduced now to appealing to Protagoras's compassion: I am so inferior to you that you must have some compassion with me. Poor memory and poor hearing have of course something in common: they impoverish understanding, in the double meaning of the term. Fine. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
What do you mean? he said. How am I to shorten my answers? Shall— (334d)

LS: No, "how do you command me to give brief answers?"

Mr. Reinken:
How do you command me to give brief answers? Shall I make them too brief?
Certainly not, I said.
But brief enough?
Yes, I said.
Shall I answer what appears to me to be brief enough, or what appears to you to be brief enough?

LS: You see, Protagoras is now sitting on high again, the high horse, and he resents Socrates[xv] dictating to him, giving him commands—Socrates's unjust conduct toward him. He does not say that Socrates is unjust in the *logos,* commits crimes in the *logos*, as Thrasymachus says, meaning that he makes logical errors and this kind of thing. He doesn't do that, for then he would have to abandon all the sense of shame, all these reserves he had, and this is not opportune for him. But you see he is now again perfectly in control of the situation. Let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:
I have heard, I said, that you can speak and teach others to speak about the same things at such length that words never seemed to fail, or with such brevity that no one could use fewer of them. Please therefore, if you talk with me, to adopt the latter or more compendious method. (334e-335a)

LS: Now Socrates appeals now no longer to Protagoras's compassion—that was hopeless—but to what Protagoras owes to his reputation. But he emphasizes this reputation. He says: I have heard. Formerly he had spoken of Protagoras's ability to give short answers as a fact, now he speaks of it only as a rumor because the ability to give short replies [LS chuckles] didn't prove to be so well founded. Yes, good.

Mr. Reinken:
Socrates, he replied, many a battle of words have I fought, and if I had followed the method of disputation which my adversaries desired, as you want me to do, I should have been no better than another, and the name of Protagoras would not have spread all over Hellas. (335a)

[xv] Strauss says "Protagoras's," evidently a misstatement.

LS: So Protagoras owes his very reputation to the fact that he followed his own judgment regarding short or long speeches, meaning [11]his being well-advised regarding his own affairs, in other words to his *sōphrosynē*, his moderation. That is the situation. Yes. Now therefore, it is hopeless, a deadlock. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
I saw that he was not satisfied with his previous answers, and that he would not play the part of answerer any more if he could help— (335a-b)

LS: No, "he would not answer any more voluntarily." Now Protagoras will never again voluntarily answer Socrates's questions. He must be forced to do so, and this forcing will take place in the sequel. And this explains the situation, and this in answer to the question which one of you raised before: this is the first time in Protagoras's life that he had made the wrong choices. That will never happen again. Good. Yes, now let us read the next speech and then we must stop.

Mr. Reinken:
and I considered that there was no call upon me to continue the conversation. So I said: Protagoras, I do not wish to force the conversation upon you if you had rather not, but when you are willing to argue with me in such a way that I can follow you, then I will argue with you. Now you, as is said of you by others and as you say of yourself, are able to have discussions in shorter forms of speech as well as in longer, for you are a master of wisdom; but I cannot manage these long speeches. I only wish that I could. You, on the other hand, who are capable of either, ought to speak shorter as I beg you, and then we might converse. But I see that you are disinclined, and as I have an engagement which will prevent my staying to hear you at greater length (for I have to be in another place), I will depart, although I should have liked to have heard you. (335b-c)

LS: Yes, that is quite a speech. Socrates speaks of his reputation again: that he will be exposed as a charlatan if he doesn't give in. But this is not the main point of the speech, because he knows that it is no longer of any use to appeal to Protagoras. This speech is addressed to the others, to the others who might force Protagoras into doing what Socrates wants him to. The situation is then this: by acting wisely, prudently, as we say, Protagoras acts unjustly. He disregards the common good, namely, that there should be a being together, a disputation.

Now we see here, as you may have observed before, that what is going on in this intermezzo is a continuation of the interrupted discussion. The discussion of the relation of justice and moderation was interrupted. But this subject is now no longer discussed, but so to speak presented on the stage for our benefit in this courtroom scene, as we can call it. First, we get some clarity, some provisional clarity about justice: justice means a decent respect for the opinion of others. The appeal to the compassion and the reputation of Protagoras was of no use. He is now trying to appeal to his respect for the opinion of others, for the *interest* of others, for the common good. And we must see what comes

out—and everyone present who is somebody will be drawn in in order to bring about the solution. Yes?

Student: I think you have built up Socrates too much, because he's the one who could argue any proposition for the sake of getting a knife into Protagoras. He'd argue for the many, against the many, with Protagoras; and when he changed his mind, against Protagoras; he'd argue under the earth, above the moon—anything to get to Protagoras, you know. That's not just, either.

LS: We will take this up. We will take this up. But the moral imputation implied—that point I would like to answer now in one or two minutes. I once wrote, when I had to write on such things: [12]"Socrates can do with any interlocutor what he likes." And then a very learned man said: "That is true of the sophists, not of Socrates," whereupon I had to tell him that I had simply translated literally what Xenophon had said about Socrates. Socrates was a very clever dialectician. He was much more than that, but he was also a very clever dialectician. But I must stop here.

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[1] Deleted "What happened to Mr. Reinken? Well, who will take his place? Let us hope that he will come; I will make my brief introductory remarks. Here he is. Very good. We have been waiting for you. You have no need to apologize."
[2] Deleted "four parts or."
[3] Deleted "So I mean"
[4] Deleted "you know"
[5] Deleted "they."
[6] Deleted "now."
[7] Deleted "something which, say"
[8] Deleted "and we must—"
[9] Deleted "now."
[10] Deleted "He didn't make too good a figure"
[11] Deleted "that as to"
[12] Deleted "I said"

Session 11: May 3, 1965

The First Breakdown of the Conversation and Its Aftermath

(335c-341c)

Leo Strauss: Now I will remind you of something which some of you will have forgotten, and what one must not forget if one wants to derive the maximum benefit from reading this dialogue—namely, the early parts: the conversation with the comrade, the conversation with Hippocrates, and so on. I will say something about this subject at a later date, perhaps next time.

Now we turn to our immediate context and I'll remind you of it. In his long speech consisting of a myth and a *logos*, Protagoras had drawn a picture most flattering to virtue: every member of society is a teacher of virtue. There is a gradation among the teachers: teachers of all, and teachers of the sons of the rich; teachers of all, and teachers of the gifted. And somehow Protagoras is at the top of the whole teaching profession. Something—well, I think it would be unfair to both sides to compare him with Mr. Willis[i] here in Chicago. The teaching profession is a profession teaching virtue. His debate with Socrates, which follows on the long speech, shows how shaky that virtue is. It shows if one reads it with some care. We have seen that the relation between justice and piety is obscure, but still more obscure is the relation of justice and piety on the one hand, and moderation and wisdom on the other. It is not excluded that the prudent or wise man, the moderate and wise man, and hence Protagoras, is unjust; and vice versa, that the just man may be a fool. But we know this rule, for example, from Callicles in the *Gorgias*. But Protagoras is surely not a Callicles; he is a cautious foreigner. When the going gets rough he refuses to give short answers and embarks on a long speech, and this leads to the interruption of the discussion. An altercation between Socrates and Protagoras starts, and this means that what we have heard before as an argument in speech, namely, the relation of moderation and wisdom on the one hand and justice on the other, is now being enacted before our eyes.[1]

There are two parts of virtue, and let me define them provisionally as follows: moderation as the ability to take care of one's own interests; and justice, complying with the interests of others or with the common good. Now we have begun to read that last time, and [we] arrived at 335c8. The situation: Socrates wishes to leave because Protagoras refuses to continue giving short answers. And Protagoras said: Why are you the one to lay down the law? How can you do that? Good. And now I think that we will continue just at this point at in 335c7: "And at the moment I have said this."

Mr. Reinken:

[i] Strauss probably refers to Chicago Public School Superintendent Benjamin C. Willis, whose strategy for dealing with school overcrowding perpetuated racial segregation and led to a school boycott in October 1963.

[Soc.:] Thus I spoke and was rising from my seat with the intention of leaving when Callias seized me by the right hand, and in his left hand caught hold of this old cloak of mine. He said: We shall not let you go, Socrates, for if you leave us this will be the end of our discussion. I must therefore beg you to remain, as there is nothing in the world that I should like better than to hear you and Protagoras discourse. Do not deny the company this pleasure. (335c-d)

LS: To "gratify all of us." Now we see here Socrates's great fairness: he would gladly listen to another long speech. No, that was before, but I remind you of that. He would gladly listen to another long speech of Protagoras but he is busy, as he said shortly before. But we know that he is not busy, and in order not to mince words, we say he lies. But lying is a kind of injustice. Socrates is unjust. But of course his injustice has a noble justification. Why does he wish to stay, if he can?

Mr. Reinken: Because Hippocrates was taken—

LS: In other words, he lies not for his own amplification but for the good of somebody else. Now here we see in what Mr. Reinken has read that Socrates himself is forced to stay for the sake of the common good. But since he is forced to stay, since he doesn't stay voluntarily, this only confirms the impression that he is not just. This little point, which must have struck you, that he explains so clearly how Callias took hold of him: with the right he took his hand, and with the left this old coat, a crude common coat. The implication: just an old coat; Socrates is not dressed up. Where is he dressed up?[2]

Student: In his mind?

LS: No, no, no. Let us not always go to the highest level. In which dialogue is he dressed up?

Students: In the *Symposium*.

LS: In the *Symposium*. And we have seen that there are a quite a few cross relations between the two dialogues. Yes. What does Socrates say now?

Mr. Reinken:
Now I had got up, and was on the verge of departing. Son of Hipponicus, I replied—

LS: That is Callias, and which adds to the solemnity. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Son of Hipponicus, I have always admired and do now heartily applaud and love your desire for wisdom— (335d)

LS: Yes, in Greek the word *philosophia*, because *philosophia* means love of wisdom. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and I would gladly comply with your request if I could. But the truth is that I cannot. And what you ask is as great an impossibility to me as if you bade me run a race and keep pace with Crison of Himera when in his prime, or with some long-distance runner or courier. To such a request I should reply that I would fain ask the same of my own legs, but they refuse to comply. And therefore, if you want to see Crison and me in the same race, you must bid him slacken his speed to mine, for I cannot— (335d-336a)

LS: So in other words, transform the race into a non-race. It might be amusing to see that, but it is surely no longer a race. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
for I cannot run quickly, and he can run slowly. And in like manner, if you want to hear me and Protagoras discoursing, you must ask him to shorten his answers and keep to the point, as he did at first; if not, how can there be any discussion? For discussion is one thing, and making an oration is quite another— (336a-b)

LS: Yes, making a public speech, making a speech to the *dēmos* is another. Now Socrates refuses to stay under the conditions. *Ultra posse, nemo obligatur*: no one is obliged to do anything beyond his power. And of course, a discussion is not a race. Now you see the joke here when he speaks of Crison and the other kind of runners. Crison was a very famous man who had won a number of races, including Olympian games. Protagoras may be equally well compared to a particularly famous champion and to any of a large group of runners. You see the compliment for Protagoras is also qualified here. Yes.

A dialogue between Socrates and Protagoras of course would be a very unexciting thing because they are not equals, that's also implied. In dialogue Socrates is much better; and Socrates of course does not change his tempo for the sake of Protagoras, and therefore such a conversation is also unexciting for the reason given here regarding long speeches. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
But you see, Socrates— (336b)

LS: So the conflict is very clear now. Protagoras wants one thing; Socrates wants the other, and no possibility of reconciliation. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
But you see, Socrates, said Callias, that Protagoras may fairly claim to speak in his own way, just as you claim to speak in yours.

LS: Yes. You see more literally, the word he uses: Protagoras seems to say just things. In other words, Callias says: Socrates, you are unjust; Protagoras is just, for he demands that everyone should be free to converse as he likes. Equal rights for each; nothing seems to be more just. Socrates rejects this view, as we can see already now: no equal rights for unequal people, as we have seen [in] the race, [3]the racer and Socrates. And Protagoras

and Socrates are not equals: Protagoras is there and Socrates is here. Justice demands that the superior must make concessions to the inferior if there is to be a community among them. But, we must say, is after all Socrates not in fact the superior man? Ought not he to be the one who makes concessions to Protagoras? Yes, except for one point: he has to consider Hippocrates. We must never forget that. [4]So in other words, Socrates is in a way unjust, but this injustice has a just reason; whereas Protagoras's justice, such as it is, has an unjust reason because it has to do with his prestige, with his prestige not being impaired. And that is not a sound reason. Yes?

Student: This great concern for Hippocrates makes one believe that Hippocrates is a fellow who could be horribly corrupted easily. But we saw from his first statement to Socrates that Hippocrates is far from corrupted from the point of view of Socrates, and the fact that he was greatly entranced with Protagoras, and that Protagoras was generally branded the next big name to come down the pike. In other words, aren't we being a little kind to Socrates by saying that he always wants to defend the already corrupted Hippocrates?

LS: Yes, well that is a much broader question. In other words, you assert that the whole assumption underlying the dialogue, the *hypothesis*, as the Greeks say, is itself ironical.

Student: Well, yes, I think there's something in it.

LS: Yes, I would admit that, but we have first to take what we see very literally and seriously, and then we can perhaps later on take up the question: Why does Socrates do such like things regardless of whether Hippocrates is the apparent cause or justification or not? Good. Now let us first follow the litigation. Yes?

Mr. Bruell: Just a technical point, but does Callias say that both Socrates and Protagoras say just things, or that Protagoras says them?

LS: Protagoras says them.

Mr. Bruell: Because there is a textual—

LS: No, no, that is Protagoras's point. Protagoras says [that] everyone should be free to converse as he likes, and if Protagoras likes to make long speeches and Socrates does not like to hear long speeches, that's too bad for Socrates. That is Protagoras's point of view, which will become perfectly clear from this sequel. Now?

Mr. Reinken:
Here Alcibiades interposed— (336b)

LS: You know, the great Alcibiades.

Mr. Reinken:
and said: That, Callias, is not a true statement of the case. (336b)

LS: No, no, "you do not speak nobly"—we must translate this literally, and which can also mean "you do not speak justly," but it has a broader meaning. He in fact means here that Callias's proposal is unjust. That will become [clear]. But let us first read this whole passage.

Mr. Reinken:
For our friend Socrates—

LS: "For this Socrates here."

Mr. Reinken:
For this Socrates here admits that he cannot make a speech—in this he yields—

LS: Meaning a long speech.

Mr. Reinken: Oration.
in this he yields the palm to Protagoras; but I should be greatly surprised if he yielded to any living man in the ability to handle the give and take of argument. Now if Protagoras will make a similar admission, and confess that he is inferior to Socrates in argumentative skill, that is enough for Socrates.

LS: You see, he speaks on behalf of the race. He is strictly an agonistic man, the race. And if Protagoras concedes defeat right at the beginning, well, that's all we need. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
But if he claims superiority in argument as well, let him ask and answer—not, when a question is asked, slipping away from the point, and instead of answering, making a speech at such length that most of his hearers forget the question at issue (not that Socrates is likely to forget, I will be bound for that, although he may pretend in fun that he has a bad memory). And Socrates— (336c-d)

LS: You remember [5]Socrates had said that he has a poor memory. Now Alcibiades lets the cat out of the bag. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And Socrates appears to me to be more in the right than Protagoras.

LS: Yes. Well, the term used here is the one which, since Aristotle, has a clear meaning of equity, the higher kind of justice. But we cannot necessarily presuppose that here. Anyway, we can translate: "To me Socrates seems to say the more equitable thing." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
That is my view, and every man ought to say what he thinks. (336d)

LS: Yes. Very good. The honest democrat, Alcibiades. Now Alcibiades is obviously the bottle holder for Socrates, and he says, very clearly siding with Socrates, that the opponent of Socrates, Protagoras, acts unjustly. Socrates had not insisted on his right; Socrates had only kindly requested what Alcibiades asks for as a matter of right, namely, that since he is the poorer of the two, Protagoras should make some concession to him. Implied is [that] justice is not equality, or not simply equality, but recognition of superiority or inferiority. He also notes this point about Socrates's playfulness. We have said that Socrates lies; this is of course a harsh statement. Alcibiades[ii] brings it down to its proper proportions and says that Socrates jokes. But needless to say, a jocular lie is still a lie. We mustn't forget that. Yes. So now it is perfectly clear, each of the two antagonists has found a bottle holder. But this only aggravates the difficulty, it doesn't solve it. Now what comes next?

Mr. Reinken:
When Alcibiades had done speaking, someone—Critias, I believe—spoke: O Prodicus and Hippias, Callias appears to me to be a partisan of Protagoras. And this led Alcibiades, who loves opposition, to take the other side. But we should not be partisans either of Socrates or of Protagoras. Let us rather unite in entreating both of them not to break up the discussion. (336e-337a)

LS: In between, yes. Now Socrates does not say that Critias said it; he only says: I believe. This is a reminder that this is not always a verbatim report. I believe [that] no one of you believed that it was always a verbatim report of an actual conversation, but it is not uninteresting that it is pointed out here. Now Critias does not say, if you read carefully, that Alcibiades sides with Socrates. In a way, Critias himself sides with Socrates, as we have seen at the initial scene: Alcibiades and Critias came together after Socrates and Hippocrates [and] that formed a kind of group by itself, as you remember. He sides with Socrates—Critias sides with Socrates only to one extent, inasmuch as Socrates in contradistinction to Protagoras wishes to continue the discussion.

Now Critias brings up another aspect of justice: justice is impartiality. We all know that. By bringing in Prodicus and Hippias as he does here, he unwittingly prepares that deliberation with the other sophists which Socrates had quasi-promised to Hippocrates in 314b to c. So we have now [quite literally][iii] the establishment of a court of justice. It begins with the proposal of Critias. Now how does it go on?

Mr. Reinken:
Prodicus—

LS: You remember, Critias had started it, and now the two other sophists speak subsequently, one after the other. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

[ii] Strauss says "Protagoras," evidently a misstatement.
[iii] The tape is not clear at this point.

Prodicus added: That, Critias, seems to me to be well said, for those who are present at such discussions ought to be impartial hearers of both the speakers, remembering, however, that impartiality is not the same as equality, for both sides should be impartially heard, and yet an equal need should not be assigned to both of them, but to the wiser a higher need should be given, and a lower to the less wise. (337a)

LS: Yes. Now Prodicus accepts the role of arbiter, but he demands unequal distribution: more to the wiser, less to the unwise. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And I as well as Critias would beg you, Protagoras and Socrates, to grant our request—

LS: You see now the formation of a third party. Socrates and Protagoras, the two parties; and now a third party, which throws some light on foreign policy in our age. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
which is that you will dispute with one another and not wrangle, for friends dispute with friends out of good will, but only adversaries and enemies wrangle. And then our meeting will be most delightful, for in this way you, who are the speakers, will be most likely to win esteem, and not praise only, among us— (337a-b)

LS: No, no, "not win praise." He explains that.

Mr. Reinken: And not mere praise?

LS: No, "and not be praised." No "mere."

Mr. Reinken:
and not mere praise, among us who are your audience. For esteem is a sincere conviction of the hearers' souls, but praise is often an insincere verbal expression of men uttering falsehoods contrary to their conviction. And thus we, who are the hearers, will be gratified and not pleased, for gratification is of the mind when receiving wisdom and knowledge, but pleasure is of the body when eating or experiencing some other bodily delight. (337b-c)

LS: Yes. Now this is in a way a very crude parody of Prodicus's hobby or specialty: he makes subtle distinctions between the meaning of different terms and in order to avoid logical errors. Now what Prodicus does here is to appeal to the better part of Protagoras and Socrates. The implication is that he is morally superior to both, and he admonishes them to be friends. This is all we have to consider now, and now let us see how it goes on.

Mr. Reinken:
Thus spoke Prodicus, and many of the company applauded his words.

LS: So you see, Prodicus does not receive universal praise, as in [the case of] quite a few others. Hippias will receive universal praise soon after, and we will see that this is very meaningful. But why should Prodicus's speech not receive universal praise, if we disregard this subtle distinction of terms and consider the substance of his speech? What did he say which is not very popular? Yes?

Mr. Reinken: That the wise deserve more than the others.

LS: Yes, I think so. Now let us turn to the next speech.

Mr. Reinken:
Hippias the sage spoke next.

LS: [Hippias is] the only one who is given this manifestly ironical adjective here of the wise one. Yes. You remember him before, yes? He was a physicist and half-mathematician. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
He said: All of you who are here present I reckon to be kinsmen and friends and fellow citizens, by nature and not by convention, for by nature like is akin to like, whereas convention is the tyrant of mankind and often compels us to do many things which are against nature. How great would be the disgrace then if we, who know the nature of things— (337c-d)

LS: But this has a very powerful literal meaning: the nature of things, especially of the natural things. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and are the wisest of the Hellenes, and as such are met together in this city, which is the center of wisdom in Hellas, and in the greatest and most glorious house of this city, should have nothing to show worthy of this height of dignity, but should only quarrel with one another like the meanest of mankind! (337d-e)

LS: Let us stop here. We see the picture: there is some wisdom in the world but [it is] concentrated in Greece; and in Greece it is concentrated in Athens; and in Athens still it is concentrated in the house of that great fool Callias.

Now the physicist Hippias addresses all men present, whereas Prodicus had addressed only Socrates and Protagoras. All men present are friends because all of them are wise, meaning also of course Callias and the others. And no wonder—read a little bit later after the end of this speech.

Mr. Reinken:
This proposal was received by the company with universal approval. (338b)

LS: "And all present." Naturally, everyone was flattered. [Laughter] He appeals to natural right, as you see here: "all wise men are akin and fellow citizens." All wise men form a city, and this is of course a natural city, not a conventional city. They help one another as fellow citizens and do not help the unwise, for the unwise are people who by definition cannot be helped because they would make a mess of every help they are given. Now this is a very important point for the understanding of this kind of literature. To mention the most famous—I mean, if [6][I] state it in [a] generalization: helping friends and not helping or perhaps even harming the non-friends, the enemies, did you ever hear this view? Where?

Student: The *Republic*.

LS: Who says it? Polemarchus, with a reference to the poet Simonides, who will come up here soon. Yes. But in the dialogue *Cleitophon*, which has come down to us as a Platonic dialogue now generally regarded as spurious, Cleitophon, an adherent of the sophist Thrasymachus, says that the Socratic view of justice is: justice consists in helping friends and hurting enemies. And in Aristophanes's *Clouds*, which is in a way anti-Socratic, this is the principle on which Socrates's pupil Strepsiades acts: he refuses to pay his debts to the creditors [LS chuckles] because he is wise and they are not wise, and there are no obligations of the wise to the unwise. Hippias, in contradistinction to Prodicus, implies the equality not of all men (nonsense, as some people have understood it that way) but—I have only one intelligible word [for it]—of all intellectuals in the widest sense, i.e., people who do nothing but reading and/or writing or similar things. Well, this must of course be defined. We can say a bank clerk also does nothing but reading and writing, but no one would call him an intellectual, so you must improve a bit on my provisional definition. And this gives in to terrific applause. You see, the Socratic concept is always between the true intellectual and the sham intellectual, just as we make a distinction between a true physician and a sham physician. Now in this case the distinction is fairly simple, because we ask him to produce a diploma; but there are no diplomas for intellectuals. I mean, you cannot possibly get such a diploma from any institution. [LS chuckles] But the half-heartedness and the inconsistency of Hippias are of course shown by the fact that this natural city of the wise consists exclusively of Greeks; and why should there not be non-Greek wise men? What he understands by the wise men are the more sophisticated amongst the Greek gentlemen and including, of course, himself and the others. But we must finish his speech now.

Mr. Reinken:
[Hippias:] I do pray and advise you, Protagoras— (337e)

LS: Now he addresses the two antagonists themselves. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and you, Socrates, to agree upon a compromise. Let us be your peacemakers. And do not you, Socrates, aim at this precise and extreme brevity in discourse, if Protagoras objects— (337e-338a)

LS: No, "if it is not pleasant to Protagoras." I simply do not know why they make these silly unliteral translations, because one is as good English, I believe, as the other, so it can only be some desire to deviate by hook and by crook from the letter of the text. And [to understand] what is underlying that, I think we would have to call in Dr. Freud or someone. Yes. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
but loosen and let go the reins of speech, that your words may present themselves grander and more graceful before us. Neither do you, Protagoras, go forth on the gale with every sail set out of sight of land into an ocean of words [laughter], but let there be a mean observed by both of you. Do as I say. And let me also persuade you to choose an umpire— (338a-b)

LS: "To elect," even, to make it quite clear.

Mr. Reinken:
to elect an umpire or overseer or president; he will keep watch over your words and will prescribe their proper length. (338a-b)

LS: Yes, well, "the medium length," one could say. We see Hippias goes beyond Prodicus in his practical proposal. He does not leave it, as Prodicus did, at admonition: "behave like friends." He proposes an institutional safeguard, an arbiter. And the implication of course is that Protagoras and Socrates are not wise enough and each of them pursues one extreme: one the terribly short speeches, and the other the terribly long speeches. Let there be a wiser man who will watch the right mean between shortness and brevity, and let him be the arbiter. And of course, for this reason as well as the one before, he receives universal applause. Yes. Now?

Mr. Reinken:
This proposal was received by the company with universal applause. (338b)

LS: Yes. "And all praised it." That one must keep in mind. What is praiseworthy and what is not. Plato didn't make these distinctions for nothing. Yes?

Mr. Bruell: Don't we have to say, remember Prodicus's definition of praise, that it's possible—

LS: Yes, but since this has been ridiculed, I do not believe [7]that we can ascribe this to Plato, or to Socrates for that matter. Yes?

Mr. Bruell: Does the last proposal of Hippias mean that his natural city is in need of that convention to correct the faults?

LS: That is a very good point, yes. But in fairness to Hippias, we must say that he says the *nomos* does many things against nature; he doesn't say that *nomos* does everything

against nature. But that is a good point. Surely that is a typical example of a convention that must be established by human agency.

Student: Can we say that this is a strange analysis because either it is such a singular insight into the nature of man, that unequal people won't get along but equal people will get along, because it appeals to the vanity of these second-string sophists that are present?

LS: Well, there are not only second-string sophists, but there are also Athenian citizens, you know, who want to belong to the avant-garde, as they say.

Same Student: That is what I was getting at. Do these people feel some satisfaction of their vanity in being lumped together . . .

LS: Yes, but don't all people like—I mean all with some exceptions on some occasions—to be praised as wise? I mean, as a very nasty man once put it, namely, Hobbes: to disagree with a man means tacitly to accuse him of ignorance. And this is his explanation of [8]why discussions become so easily nasty, you know, because the man whose view is contested regards himself as insulted by the disagreement.

Same Student: Well, I agree with that, but [9]if that is so, how much significance should we attach to the fact that the approval is universal as opposed to partial in the case of Prodicus?

LS: I would say that one should not disregard the point which I made and which I believe you repeated, namely, that Prodicus had spoken only of Protagoras and Socrates as wise men. And he says: We all are wise. And that is true. But it has of course also something to do with the thing—Prodicus led only to admonition and Hippias[iv] arrived at a proposal, so to speak, with teeth in it. It doesn't have true teeth, as we shall see, but it is at least an attempt at an institutional guarantee in contradistinction to a mere admonition. Mr. Levy?

Mr. Levy: Is there anything at all significant in the fact that the one who is really the most foolish of them, Hippias the sage, the one who is kidded for his lack of wisdom, is the one who comes the closest to the philosopher-king?

LS: Yes, but to a caricature of the philosopher-king. We will see that in the immediate sequel. No, let me put it this way. In a way, the whole *Protagoras* is a justification of Hippias over against Protagoras. We cannot see that now, but in anticipation of that—because the last section of the *Protagoras* contains a vindication of the art of measurement, and that is of course a mathematical art; and we know that Hippias liked these things and Protagoras looked down on [10][them]. But this only means that even a less intelligent man may occasionally hit on an important point which a man superior to him misses. We know there are no mechanical devices here, and I believe they will never be found. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:

[iv] Strauss says "Protagoras," evidently a misstatement.

Callias said that he would not let me off, and they begged me to choose an overseer. But I said that to choose an umpire of discourse would be unseemly, for if the person chosen was inferior, then the inferior or worse ought not to preside over the better; or if he was equal, neither would that be well, for he who is our equal will do as we do, and what will be the use of choosing him? And if you say, "Let us have a better then," to that I answer that, as a matter of fact you cannot have any one who is wiser than Protagoras. And if you choose another who is not really better, and whom you only say is better, to put another over him as though he were an inferior person would be an unworthy reflection on him— (338b-c)

LS: Is that not perfectly clear? It is impossible to choose an arbiter: an inferior obviously is an insult; an equal is impractical, [for] he would make the same mistake; and a superior is unthinkable if you have a man of such superior wisdom as Protagoras. There can be no arbiter, no superior, no ruler of the wise. Impartiality is very well, but impartiality without wisdom will be of no use. He exaggerates: sometimes the simple impartiality will do, as we all know, but in cases of any intricacy, impartiality is not enough, obviously. The wise man is the sole and sufficient judge of what he chooses. If Protagoras chooses long speeches, he is the best judge. And if we think that Socrates overdoes his praise of Protagoras and regards himself as equally wise, it also means [that if] Socrates [11]chooses short speeches, no one can interfere with that. In other words, let me make quite clear what the issue is: the wise man does not pay respect to the opinion of the unwise, i.e., to an unwise opinion. That is to say, he is concerned with his good. He is, according to the definition suggested in the debate between Socrates and Protagoras, moderate-wise[v] but he is not just. He is not just, because by justice we understand now a deference to the opinion of others, regardless of whether they are wise or unwise. You see how our subject, moderation and wisdom versus justice, is continued here in deed, of course in a comical way. This is a piece of a comedy, but in a good comedy there is always an underlying seriousness. Someone raised his hand. Mr. Shulsky?

Mr. Shulsky: Well, then we sort of get a vindication of Callias's original opinion. Each one should be allowed to speak the way he wants to: Protagoras should make long speeches and Socrates short speeches.

LS: Yes, but Socrates refuses to listen. That is an injustice of Socrates. Let us see how this develops.

Mr. Reinken:
would be an unworthy reflection on him[vi]—not that, as far as I am concerned, any reflection is of much consequence to me. (338c)

LS: Yes, Socrates is here of course—in one sense it is of course not mock humility, because Socrates is not vain. That is somehow the presupposition of the whole presentation. But that does not mean that Socrates is humble in the sense that he is not aware of his superiority to the others, if that is the meaning of humility. Yes?

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[v] Strauss says "moderate-dash-wise."
[vi] That is, Protagoras.

Mr. Reinken:
Let me tell you then what I will do in order that the conversation and discussion may go on as you desire. If Protagoras is not disposed to answer, let him ask and I will answer, and I will endeavor to show at the same time how, as I maintain, he ought to answer. (338c-d)

LS: "To show him." Did he[vii] not bring this out?

Mr. Reinken: No.

LS: Disgraceful! You see there the very high claim: I, the unwise, the man of little wisdom, am going to give Protagoras, the wise man, a lesson in how to do that.

Mr. Reinken:
to show him at the same time how, as I maintain, he ought to answer; and when I have answered—

LS: No, "how in my opinion the answerer should answer." In other words, he will give him a lesson in short speeches, whereas he is perfectly willing to grant that Protagoras is the past master in long speeches [LS chuckles], but now we are concerned with short speeches because Socrates has no time, we recall, to listen to long speeches. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and when I have answered as many questions as he likes to ask, let him in like manner answer me. And if he seems to be not very ready at answering the precise question asked of him, you and I will unite in entreating him, as you entreated me, not to spoil the discussion. And this will require no special overseer—all of you shall be overseers together. (338d-e)

LS: Socrates has the best of two worlds. He considers the wishes of the others, the wish for an arbitration. After he has shown that an arbitration is impossible, he makes this great concession: you all are arbiters. But why does he make this concession? In order that *his* wish be considered afterward. So Socrates will answer the questions, but then in the later stage, Socrates will again be in the position of the questioner. In other words, the compromise proposed by Socrates is entirely a compromise on Socrates's terms, not on Protagoras's terms. That is especially clear in the passage to which I referred: I am going to teach him what it means to give brief answers. All will be overseers of Protagoras's conduct. [It is] a kind of democracy we get in this way. Now if he who answers knows—because a non-knower cannot answer—and therefore is wise, Socrates now admits that he is wise: he can answer the questions and not merely raise questions. I mean, the comical exaggeration you must always take into account, but there is more than that. He even admits that he is able to teach Protagoras how to answer. He refuses to be subjected to an arbiter because he is at least as good as any other. You know, all these features at first

[vii] The translator, Walter Hamilton.

glance are signs of an unjust man, but this injustice is a special one. Yes, now the end of this speech.

Mr. Reinken:
This was generally approved—

LS: "By all," because generally can also mean not universally. But in the Greek it is perfectly clear. *All* agree. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
All agreed, and Protagoras, though very much against his will, was obliged to agree— (338e)

LS: "Was compelled"; obliging is not the same as compelling, and here it is perfectly clear that he was forced.

Mr. Reinken:
was compelled to agree that he would ask questions; and when he had put a sufficient number of them, that he would answer in his turn those which he was asked in short replies.

LS: In other words, no long speeches anymore. That's out. No long speeches. Socrates is completely victorious. The apparent compromise is in fact not a compromise at all. Protagoras is compelled by the others to dance to Socrates's tune. Yes?

Student: How do these rules that Socrates established for the discussion make it any different from any that the umpire might have selected? Isn't he in a way prescribing the same, overseeing the words and length of words in the same way as the overseer would?

LS: Yes, but there is no special chair. It makes a great difference. If you have ever been in a meeting led by a chairman who was an efficient chairman, and a meeting in which there is no chairman except someone who says, "You come now," and [who] would never conduct the whole thing, it would make a great difference. Now Protagoras is compelled to accept Socrates's proposal, compelled to continue the conversation. You remember, in 335b1 Socrates had observed that Protagoras would not *voluntarily* continue the conversation; well, he is now forced to do it. Socrates has successfully used justice for his purpose. But this purpose includes justice, namely, consideration for Hippocrates and other people of this kind.

So we have seen before when we saw the earlier scene, you know, when Socrates compared the men he saw in Callias's house to figures from Hades: [12]Prodicus like Tantalus, and so on. Socrates is the Odysseus, but a just Odysseus. Yes?

Student: Well, couldn't Protagoras—we know that Protagoras sees that he has been defeated because it says "very much against his will."

LS: That's right.

Same Student: And why does he not at this point attempt a long speech explaining why in fact this is bad way to serve the truth . . .

LS: This somehow wouldn't fit into his consideration. He wants to win.

Student: Well, perhaps he could, by making even at this point a long speech.

LS: Then Socrates would have left. Socrates said, "I refuse to have listen to any long speeches." One of the most striking things in the litigation scene, as we may call that, is something which ain't, which isn't there, and which you see only if you ask what is missing. Protagoras doesn't say a word in this whole litigation scene. [13]After all, Protagoras is not exactly a mute man, you know.

Now let me say a few words about the litigation scene in general. Here Socrates shows not only that Protagoras is a poor teacher—that he had shown already in the debate—but also that he is a poor public speaker, the term used in 336b3, where Socrates says Protagoras should not engage in public speech, in rhetoric. Protagoras is completely silent in this scene after the beginning, [14]which means in practical terms [that] he cannot take care of his interests. Callias must work for him, or so. He lacks the ability to advise himself well regarding his benefit; others must take care of him. He loses because he is unobliging, while Socrates is or appears to be obliging. He says: Well, my long speeches, I am sorry, I am not good at that, I grant that. Or on another level: Long speeches are wonderful, but I have no time. That this contradicts itself is another matter, but it is at least obliging. Protagoras, the alleged teacher of good advice, lacks good advice in his own case. But being obliging, i.e., ceding from one's right, is rudimentary justice, perhaps even more than rudimentary justice. Hence Socrates acts on the principle that it is moderate or wise to be just. It is to your own interest if you are obliging, if you cede. The man who wants to have more, who wants to win, loses. Nothing could be more edifying. Protagoras loses, for Protagoras explicitly acts on the principle that it is good to have more—335c, as you will see, when he says: I would not be that famous personality if I had always conducted my speeches according to the wishes of my opponents. Socrates seems to do the same. This leads to conflict and hence, since these are not savages, the demand for arbitration or for impartial justice. But impartiality is not enough. The arbiter must also be wise. Take a very simple case: if the object of an arbitration is some stock exchange speculation, there you have to be very wise in stock exchange. How could a man ignorant of these things be an arbiter? Therefore, there cannot be arbiters, i.e., rulers of the wise. The wise cannot be obliged to obey laws made by unwise people, because that is fundamentally the same case. Yet by being obliging to the unwise, Socrates succeeds in laying down the law favorable to him. That is so, it's a strange comedy. But as in every comedy, it is of course unreal, as people say, [it is] untrue; it abstracts from something very important. What is the defective truth of this simple proposition that a man like Socrates, who is so prudent, so obliging, takes best care of his interests and he will lay down the law?

Mr. Bruell: This is a select group. Socrates was . . .

LS: Exactly. This is surely not universally true. We have only to remember Socrates's defeat in the trial of the generals after the battle of the Arginusae, and especially his defeat in his own trial. Socrates succeeds only in the company of the sophists and their adherents, i.e., in an environment where only speeches count. But in the *polis*, not only speeches count; it may be a very poor speaker who gets most of the ballots. And behind that is brachial power, ultimately. Brachial power. And therefore here no one thinks of fighting it out in a muscular way. It is all done by speeches. So that is a great point which will come up again. Mr. Dry?

Mr. Dry: It wasn't just that simple that brachial power is rhetoric, correct, because it wasn't Socrates's justice simply that allowed him to win.

LS: No, no, Socrates proved to be better. Socrates gained universal or almost universal agreement.

Mr. Dry: But wouldn't we say that was more due to his superior speaking ability than to his justice?

LS: Yes, sure, I myself said that. But we must not forget, Socrates's injustice is of a particular kind: it is an injustice in the service of justice. If you want to have a humble contemporary example—I am sure there is no one here, I believe not even you and you, who do not know the character of Perry Mason.[viii] Do you? Thursday from 7 to 8. [Laughter] You must see that if you want to understand this country. And Perry Mason, who also commits acts of breaking and entering, you know, and quite a few other things—and yet never in order to feather his own nest, but always for the sake of justice. Now on a grander scale, that is done by Socrates. [Laughter] Now don't laugh about that. Perry Mason is described by his creator as (how does he call it?) clean like a hound's tooth and sharp like a steel trap. This man has understood an important point of Aristotle's *Ethics*: the difference between moral and intellectual virtue. So don't despise these things.

Mr. Reinken: I don't despise them! [Laughter] . . . [ix]

LS: —which you cannot do when you hear a long speech. Where the Athenians, very fair men, say we don't want to make long speeches . . .[x] make notes of this and then you miss what he says while you are making the notes. So there is something even on the crude level in Plato. But of course it is clear that sometimes it is absolutely impossible to answer a question without saying: My dear, the question is very ill-phrased; you don't make certain distinctions, these words which you use are so ambiguous that you can give all kinds of answers. It's a long speech. But therefore, as stated and as frequently used

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[viii] *Perry Mason*, a long-running American television show (1957–66) based on the stories of Erle Stanley Gardner. The title character was a defense attorney played by actor Raymond Burr.
[ix] The tape was changed at this point.
[x] There is a gap in the tape here.

here by Socrates, it is of course comic, as if it were really like one who is a good runner and a fast runner, and the other is a slow runner. You know? And then of course from the point of running, naturally the fast runner should win. But in thinking, it is not so much the fastness or slowness, of course, but the truth. [15]Still, to some extent the truth, knowledge of the truth, is bound up with a certain kind of slowness: step by step. People who are very clever can do this very fast, but they also must go step by step nevertheless. Good. So Socrates, as I said—oh I am sorry, I forgot you. Yes?

Student: I am still worried about this scene as an illustration of the unity of well-advisedness and justice, or the disunity of it. Socrates's basic method, stripped to its essentials, is, I think, an unjust one. That is to say, he interprets what the company at large wants, which is a continuation of the discussion, and then begins the argument by setting forth as a condition of the continuation of the discussion that it be on his terms.

LS: Yes.

Same Student: And despite the twists of the argument, it eventually comes back down to that and Socrates wins his point. This then is taking advantage of the desires of other people in order to impose his own desires on Protagoras.

LS: Yes, sure, I believe I admitted that, but I only add this qualification: Why does Socrates do it? Does he do it in order to show off, to win an argument, or does he not have a nobler purpose? And I would say [that] he has obviously a nobler purpose, indicated by the presence of that silent Hippocrates. And Socrates says indeed—and that is the point, it is one of these ticklish, marginal questions: How far can you go in disregarding justice for the sake of justice?[16] The Robin Hood problem. But one does not understand the problem of justice if one does not take into consideration these marginal problems. As it were, the true problem shows in what seems to be the merely marginal problem. [17]I have nothing against the assertion that Socrates acts unjustly, provided you understand, you define the character of his unjust action properly. He cheats in a way, but what is the purpose for which he cheats? That this issue is not settled by the fact is shown very simply. I think we are about in the middle of the dialogue and the other half is needed to satisfy your reasonable doubts, so I suggest that we go on. Mr. Reinken—

Now I would like to say one thing about the next section which starts at the end of 338 and goes into 347. In this section, Protagoras asks the questions and Socrates answers, as was stipulated by Socrates's law. But the largest part of this section, from the beginning of 342 to the end, consists of one long speech by Socrates, which proves clearly his injustice. Protagoras mustn't make long speeches—strictly forbidden—but Socrates does. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:
He[xi] began to put his questions as follows: (338e)

[xi] That is, Protagoras.

LS: Not "as follows," "about as follows." That is another indication that this is not a verbatim report. In other words,[18] we do not know how much Socrates made up this story while telling it to these comrades. This is not surprising, because surely Plato made these things up more or less out of pure cloth, and poets are of course liars. I mean, if Tolstoy begins one of his novels in this way, say, "X stood at this window": of course he never stood at the window. X never existed. It's a lie. You would say that is very crude, but it has some non-crude implications. Good. Now?

Mr. Reinken:
I am of the opinion, Socrates, he said, that skill in poetry is the principal part of education; and this I conceive to be the ability to understand— (338e-339a)

LS: "The principal" is perhaps too strong. "A very great part," it can also mean. The Greek superlative without article can mean both a very great thing or the greatest. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and this I conceive to be the ability to understand which compositions of the poets are correct, and which are not, and to know how to distinguish between them and, when asked, give the reasons.

LS: Yes. Now [19]why does Protagoras turn to the criticism and interpretation of poetry? Well, it's clear: he assumes that in this field he will be superior to Socrates. Poetry is somehow more akin to long speeches than to short speeches, at least of the Socratic kind. We know there are short speeches in dramas, for example, but they are not Socratic short speeches.

He turns then to the poet he chooses, Simonides, as you will see immediately; and Simonides was one of the ancient sophists mentioned by Protagoras who concealed their being sophists. Simonides was said to be the first poet to write poetry for pay,[xii] which would also link him up with Protagoras, who taught virtue for pay. Lessing, the famous German . . . of the eighteenth century, called Simonides, on the basis of all kinds of information, the Greek Voltaire,[xiii] a view which is now universally rejected by classical scholars, but this does not necessarily prove that it is groundless. Good. So in other words, Protagoras now brings up a way of handling things in which he believes he is likely to get back at Socrates, to show his superiority. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And I propose to transfer the question which you and I have been discussing to the domain of poetry; we will speak as before of virtue (339a)

LS: So in other words, the subject matter will remain the same; only the treatment will be different: virtue. Yes.

[xii] See *Scholia vetera in Pindari carmina: Scholia in Meneonicas et Isthmionicas*, ed. S. B. Drachmann (Leipzig: Teubner, 1927), S 9a, 3.214 as well as 9b (3.214): "He would say these things against Simonides, disparaging the man as a lover of money."
[xiii] G. E. Lessing, *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, preface.

Mr. Reinken:
but in reference to a passage of a poet. Now Simonides says to Scopas the son of Creon the Thessalian:

It is with difficulty that, on the one hand, a man can become truly good, built four-square in hands and feet and mind, a work without a flaw.

Do you know the poem? or shall I repeat the whole?

There is no need, I said; for I am perfectly well acquainted with the ode—I have made a careful study of it. [Laughter] (339a-b)

LS: So this simple triumph of merely better information is not given to Protagoras. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Very well, he said.

LS: That you did well, thank you.

Mr. Reinken:
And do you think that the ode is a good composition, and true?
Yes, I said, both good and true.
But if there is a contradiction, can the composition be good or true?
No, not in that case, I replied. (339b)

LS: So Socrates thinks very highly of Simonides's poem. The standard of judgment which is common to Socrates and Protagoras is this: self-contradiction, even in a poem, is fatal. Well, I believe that no present-day poet would accept that, but Socrates and Protagoras agree as to that. I mean, not that different characters may not contradict one another any time—that is no difficulty—but the poet speaking his own mind may not contradict himself. This is a tough demand. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And is there not a contradiction? he asked. Reflect.
Well, my friend, I have reflected.
And does not the poet proceed to say, "I do not agree with the word of Pittacus, albeit the utterance of a wise man: 'With difficulty can a man be good'"? Now you will observe that this is said by the same poet who made the first statement.
I know it.
And do you think, he said, that the two sayings are consistent?
Yes, I said, I think so (at the same time I could not help fearing there might be something in what he said). And you think otherwise?
Why, he said, how can he be consistent in both? First of all, premising as his own thought, "It is with difficulty that a man can become truly good," and then a little further

on in the poem, forgetting, and blaming Pittacus and refusing to agree with him, when he says, "With difficulty can a man be good"— (339b-d).

LS: Yes, "and forgetting Pittacus, who had said the same thing as he had said" [339d]. Yes? That it is hard to be—all right, good; it is in Greek not quite the same.

Mr. Reinken:
which is the very same thing. And yet when he blames him who says the same with himself, he obviously also blames himself, so that he must be wrong either in his first or his second assertion. (339d)

LS: Protagoras proves that Simonides contradicts himself. Now what is the use of that? Well, one could *tentatively* suggest—don't nail me down on that—[that] if Simonides, notoriously a wise man, contradicts himself on virtue, why may not Protagoras too contradict himself regarding virtue without losing the epithet of wisdom? Perhaps there is also this possibility: perhaps it is the same kind of contradiction, namely, that Simonides said of one kind of virtue that it is difficult and of another kind that it is not difficult. And perhaps Protagoras means something like that. I do not know. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Many of the audience cheered and applauded this. (339e)

LS: You see, "many." He does not get universal acclaim. Why not? I cannot answer that question, but the perfect interpreter should be able to answer it. There is one difficulty, incidentally. The poem by Simonides is not completely preserved. The bit we know of it is chiefly known through these quotations here. This makes a minor difficulty, and perhaps not even a minor difficulty. Yes?

Mr. Shulsky: Well, it says "many"—well, now I suppose that certainly Alcibiades wouldn't cheer if it looks like Socrates is being worsted.

LS: That is the point. That is the point. You mean those who were simply following the party line. Yes, that is possible. Good. All right, now let us see. The sequel is easier to understand.

Mr. Reinken:
And I felt at first giddy and faint, as if I had received a blow from the hand of an expert boxer, when I heard his words and the sound of the cheering; and to tell you the truth, I wanted to get— (339e)

LS: To whom does he say the truth?

Mr. Reinken: The companion.

LS: Yes. You see that in the narrated dialogue, he didn't say the truth there. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
I wanted to get time to think what the meaning of the poet really was. So I turned to Prodicus and called him. (339e)

LS: You see, Socrates lies again. Yes?

Student: He lied before too when he said "at the same time I could not help fearing that there might be something to what he said." Because earlier he said he had been perfectly familiar with the poem.

LS: No, no, there is no doubt that he was perfectly familiar with the poem.

Same Student: Yes, but then when he fakes this fear, you know—

LS: No, because after all, Socrates doesn't claim to be omniscient, and there might be a real difficulty which had never occurred to him. I think that the description of the situation is very beautiful: like someone knocked out. Socrates adopts the language of the *agōn*, of the contest. And Protagoras seems to have won at this point. Now "and then I turned to Prodicus."

Mr. Reinken:
and called him. Prodicus, I said, Simonides is a countryman of yours— (339e-340a)

LS: Well, let us say a "fellow citizen"; it is clearer.

Mr. Reinken: . . . [Laughter]

LS: No, no, a fellow citizen.

Mr. Reinken:
A fellow citizen of yours—

LS: Comes from the same *polis*.

Mr. Reinken:
of the same *polis*, and you ought to come to his aid.

LS: Literally, "it is just for you to come." You know, it is after all concerned with justice. "It is just for you to come to the aid of that *hombre*."

Mr. Reinken:
It is just for you to come to his aid. I must appeal to you, like the river Scamander in Homer who, when beleaguered by Achilles, summons the Simois to aid him, saying: "Brother dear, let us both together stay the force of the hero." And I summon you, for I am afraid that Protagoras will make an end of Simonides. (340a)

LS: Socrates compares Protagoras to Achilles. Now Achilles is presented in the dialogue *Hippias—The Lesser Hippias*. Achilles is preferred by Hippias to Odysseus, because Odysseus was a notorious liar and Achilles never lies—he is absolutely honest. And this is the theme of this dialogue. And he compares Simonides to Scamandros and Prodicus to Simois. But in a way, Socrates identifies himself with Simonides or Scamandros. Now these are two rivers—the story is told in the twenty-first book of the *Iliad*: the two river gods fight Achilles and try to save Troy. And he compares himself, and Prodicus, and Simonides to these river gods. But Scamandros is finally defeated by Hephaestus, the god of the smithy, the helper of Achilles. What does this mean? Does Socrates anticipate that Simonides will be defeated by Protagoras, or at least by some immortal helper of Protagoras? We do not know. Let us see whether some of these things will become clear in the sequel. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Now is the time to rehabilitate Simonides by the application of your literary art which enables you to distinguish "will" and "wish," and make other charming distinctions like those which you drew just now. (340a-b)

LS: In other words, will and wish: this distinction is not very pronounced in Greek. That is of some importance. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:
And I should like to know whether you would agree with me, for I am of opinion that there is no contradiction in the words of Simonides. And first of all I wish that you would say whether, in your opinion, Prodicus, "being" is the same as "becoming."
Not the same, certainly, replied Prodicus. (340b)

LS: No, more: "Different, by Zeus, said Prodicus." One of the very rare oaths here.

Mr. Reinken:
Different, by Zeus, replied Prodicus.
Did not Simonides first set forth as his own view that it would be with difficulty that a man *become* truly good?
Quite right, said Prodicus. And then he blames Pittacus, not, as Protagoras imagines, for repeating that which he says himself, but for saying something different from himself. Pittacus does not say, as Simonides says, that with difficulty can a man can become good, but that with difficulty can a man *be* good. And our friend Prodicus would maintain that being, Protagoras, is not the same as becoming— (340b-c)

LS: Yes, "being and becoming are not the same, as Prodicus here says." And I believe we would grant that without having the authority of Prodicus for that. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and if they are not the same, then Simonides is not inconsistent with himself. I dare say that Prodicus and many others would say, as Hesiod says,

On the one hand, it is difficult for a man to become good,
For the gods have made virtue the reward of toil— (340c-d)

LS: Literally, "the gods put sweat in front of virtue." Before you get to virtue, you have to sweat. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
The gods put sweat before virtue;
but on the other hand, when you have climbed the height,
Then, to retain virtue, however difficult the acquisition, is easy. (340d)

LS: Yes. In other words, Socrates solves it, as we will see. Being is not becoming, and therefore Simonides does not contradict himself, for he may have thought that it is difficult to *become* virtuous—to acquire the habit of virtue, to use later language—but easy to *be* virtuous. Once you are on that peak or once you have acquired the habit of moderation regarding food, for example, it is very easy for you to be moderate. In other words, Socrates, Prodicus, Simonides, this strange triad, deny that being and becoming is the same; and Protagoras by implication asserts that being and becoming are the same, and therefore he makes that blunder in the interpretation of the Simonidian poem. And that there is such a connection between—there was a Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, who was said to have said everything is in flux, like rivers. Heraclitus. And Protagoras is linked up with that school in the Platonic dialogue *Theaetetus*. So this is not an isolated point. Socrates, Simonides, Prodicus do not agree with this view that everything is in flux. But this makes it however more difficult: Why does he compare himself or Prodicus or Simonides to the rivers Scamandros and Simois? That is very dark. That remains completely dark for the time being.

Incidentally, Prodicus's oath, which we have observed, is perfectly intelligible, I believe, in the context because he has been called upon as a fellow citizen of Simonides. In Greek you don't have a distinction between the term citizen or fellow citizen: *politēs* means both. If you say "thy *politēs*" it means of course then "thy fellow citizen"; you cannot translate it differently into English. So citizens were more than purely theoretical men. A simple example: political orations on the one hand, and Euclid, oathless, on the other. Yes. We can read I think a bit more.

Mr. Reinken:
Prodicus heard and approved, but Protagoras said: Your rehabilitation, Socrates, involves a greater error than is contained in the sentence which you are correcting.
Alas! I said, Protagoras, then I am a sorry physician, and I do but aggravate a disorder which I am seeking to cure.
Such is the fact, he said.
How so? I asked.
It would reflect great ignorance on the part of the poet, he replied, if he says that virtue, which in the opinion of all men is the hardest of all things, can be easily retained. (340d)

LS: "If virtue were such a low thing that it could be said to be easily maintained." Now there is a passage [20]which I want to look up. Protagoras says, in a word, Simonides cannot possibly have said what you, Socrates, suggest, namely, that the possession of virtue is an easy thing, i.e., a low thing. You know, what is easy, what is cheap, is low. Yes, the valuable things are those which are hard to get. No one pays any money for air although it is very valuable, as we all know.[21] Good. The possession of virtue must be a difficult thing. Must be a difficult thing. That is the objection. Now of course it raises one question on the basis of our previous reading: If virtue is such a difficult thing, and then the teaching of virtue also cannot be easy, what about the attractiveness of Protagoras's teaching? But this only in passing.

Socrates says that he is a still worse physician than the illness, meaning, self-contradiction is bad but the depreciation of virtue would be still worse. Now let us read the next speech and then we conclude. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Well, I said, and how fortunate are we— (340e)

LS: Yes, "By Zeus." By Zeus.

Mr. Reinken:
By Zeus, I said, and how fortunate are we in having Prodicus among us at the right moment, for he has a wisdom, Protagoras, which as I imagine is more than human and of very ancient date, and may be as old as Simonides or even older. Learned as you are in many things, you appear to know nothing of this. But I know, for I am a disciple of Prodicus here. And now, if I am not mistaken, you do not understand the word "difficult" [*chalepon*], in the sense which Simonides intended; and I must correct you, as Prodicus corrects me when I use the word "awful" [*deinon*][xiv]— (340e-341a)

LS: No, say "tremendous." Bring it closer to present American usage.

Mr. Reinken:
"tremendous" as a term of praise. If I say that Protagoras or any one else is a "tremendously" wise man, he asks me if I am not ashamed of calling that which is good tremendous";— (341b)

LS: Yes, does that make sense? Or "terrific" you can also use: a "terrific play," used in the sense of a good play. It's absurd, and something perhaps more absurd than the Greek of which Socrates . . .

Mr. Reinken:
and then he explains to me that the term "terrific"[xv] is always taken in a bad sense, and that no one speaks of being "terrifically" healthy or wealthy, or "terrific" peace, but of "terrific" disease, "terrific" war, "terrific" poverty, meaning by the term "terrific" evil.

[xiv] Mr. Reinken inserts the Greek words that appear in square brackets.
[xv] In the translation: "awful" here and throughout the passage.

And I think that Simonides and his countrymen, the Ceans, when they spoke of "difficult," meant "evil," or something which you do not understand. Let us ask Prodicus, for he ought to be able to answer questions about the dialect of Simonides. (341b-c)

LS: Because they come from the same town. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
What did he mean, Prodicus, by the term "difficult"?
Evil, said Prodicus. [Laughter]

LS: You see? Yes, go on.

Mr. Reinken:
And therefore, I said, Prodicus, he blames Pittacus for saying, "It is difficult to be good," just as if that were equivalent to saying, "It is evil to be good." (341c)

LS: Yes, isn't that beautiful? [LS chuckles] Now Socrates says then [that] difficult means bad, and Pittacus said then that virtue is bad. I will give you one parallel which shows you that this is not a mere joking matter. In the *Republic*, in the second book, Adeimantus's long speech, 364a, he says:

"Consider further, Socrates, another kind of language about justice and injustice employed by both laymen and poets. All with one accord reiterate that moderation and justice are fair and honorable, to be sure, but difficult and laborious; while licentiousness and injustice are pleasant and easy to win."[xvi]

So there we are. That is, praise of virtue demands that one say that virtue is easy, i.e., pleasant. If you say virtue is difficult, i.e., unpleasant, then you drive people away from the pursuit of virtue. Surely this parallel from the *Republic* shows that there is much more to that than the mere attempt to parody Prodicus. We will take this up next time.[22]

You see here again in this passage how close Socrates is to Prodicus. I mean, that is not about intimacy, but Socrates is much closer to Prodicus than to any other sophist. And within limits and to some extent, Socrates has nothing against Prodicus's concern with making nice distinctions, which doesn't prevent [23][Socrates] from frequently ridiculing him as if it were a kind of mere mannerism of Prodicus.

So I had hoped we could read much more today, because we must finish the reading of the dialogue. Well, let us hope that we can do that next time.

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[1] Deleted "So let me say"
[2] Deleted "LS: Pardon? Student: In his mind."
[3] Deleted "the two"
[4] Deleted "Mr. Dry? It's alright? **Dry**: Yes."
[5] Deleted "he said"
[6] Deleted "you said"

[xvi] Strauss again reads from Paul Shorey's translation.

[7] Deleted “that we can accept that”
[8] Deleted “the fact”
[9] Deleted “my question was aimed . . .”
[10] Deleted “these things”
[11] Deleted “if he”
[12] Deleted “you know”
[13] Deletd “you know”
[14] Deleted “and.”
[15] Deleted “but.”
[16] Deleted “you know.”
[17] Deleted “But of course”
[18] Deleted “Socrates.”
[19] Deleted “you see”
[20] Deleted “which I need now”
[21] Deleted “and”
[22] Deleted “Yes? You want to say something?”
[23] Deleted “him”

Session 12: May 5, 1965

Virtue in the Element of Poetry

(341c-347c)

Leo Strauss: Well, we have a lot to read, and I figured out that if we read more than talk, we can finish the dialogue in time. But if not, since I owe you about at least a half meeting, I can make it a whole and add it at the end.

Now I would like to mention the thing which we must remember in order to understand today's reading: Socrates's interpretation of the poem by Simonides. First, the result of the debate between Socrates and Protagoras, this must be perfectly clear in your minds. [LS writes on the blackboard] There was a type of proof that justice is equal to piety and there was a kind of proof that moderation is equal to wisdom. And then Socrates tried to prove that justice is equal to moderation, and this didn't work out, as you remember. Yes? So this is the difficulty, the obvious difficulty under which we labor still.

Now in the litigation scene, Socrates achieves his victory, i.e., he brings about what is good for him, i.e., he is moderate or wise in the sense in which these terms are used here. But he achieved this by acting unjustly, yet his unjust actions have a just motivation—namely, for the sake of Hippocrates. You remember that.

Now Socrates's interpretation of Simonides's poem contains a further exploration of the relation between moderation—we could even say prudence, to make quite clear what it is—and justice. Now Socrates had shown that contrary to Protagoras's assertion, Simonides does not contradict himself by saying that to become virtuous or good is hard. He had just asserted that according to Simonides hard means bad, and it follows from this that according to Simonides it means becoming virtuous is bad. A most shocking point. Now at this point we begin, 341d2, when Protagoras replies.[1]

Mr. Reinken:
You are entirely mistaken, Prodicus, said Protagoras, and I know very well that Simonides in using the word "difficult" meant what all of us mean, not evil, but that which is not easy—that which takes a great deal of trouble.
I said: I also incline to believe, Protagoras— (341d)

LS: No, wait a moment first. Simonides did not understand by hard what is bad, but what is not easy but comes about through many troubles. In other words, the hard is the troublesome. But of course the troublesome is one kind of the bad. You know? This is, however, not elaborated in the sequel. The main point is, superficially at least, that Protagoras denies what Prodicus says. And now what does Socrates say?

Mr. Reinken:

I also incline to believe, Protagoras, that this was the meaning of Simonides, of which our friend Prodicus was very well aware, but he thought that he would make fun, and see if you could maintain your thesis. For that Simonides could never have meant the other is clearly proved by the context, in which he says that god only has this gift. Now he cannot surely mean to say that to be good is evil, when he afterwards proceeds to say that a god only has this gift, and that this is the attribute of him and of no other. For if this be his meaning, Prodicus would impute to Simonides a character of recklessness which is very unlike his fellow citizens.[i] (341d-e)

LS: Yes. Well, literally, "Prodicus would call Simonides unrestrained," which is used here as the opposite of moderate, *sōphrōn*. Now Socrates admits that Prodicus had been teasing Protagoras, but which means in fact that he, Socrates, had been teasing him, because he was the first to say that. So Protagoras has won a victory which is not a victory. I mean, if you show that what someone said [2][as a] joke is not true, you have not refuted him.

Now Socrates goes on. If Prodicus were correct, Simonides would have said that the god is bad, which he could not possibly have said since he was a moderate man. This whole—the god question: there are two oaths in this neighborhood, as we have seen last time. But against this we must observe the following point: Simonides does not deny the identity of the hard with the bad by asserting that virtue is difficult, hence bad for men, while it is easy and hence good for the gods. Yes? Socrates here in this whole connection gratuitously imputes to Simonides the view that virtue is bad and that the god is bad, but he drops it immediately. Now you wanted to say something, Mr. Bruell?

Mr. Bruell: I couldn't follow this section because I don't—Socrates seems to say that Simonides was saying that to be good is bad or hard, whereas here he seems to have dropped altogether the distinction between becoming and being.

LS: Yes, sure, that is clear. It is quite correct as you pointed out. It will be taken up later, but that is here a riddle. Now there is also this funny thing, that Prodicus would call Simonides unrestrained and in no way a man from Ceos, in no way a "fellow citizen," which is in Greek the same word, as we have seen last time, as "citizen." Now the funny thing is that Simonides was most of his lifetime, his mature lifetime, away from Ceos. He lived as a stranger at the court of the tyrant Hieron, and so on. But let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:
And I should like to tell you, I said, what I imagine to be the real meaning of Simonides in this poem, if you will test what, in your way of speaking, would be called my skill in poetry; or if you would rather, I will be the listener.
To this proposal— (341d)

LS: The listener to Protagoras. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

[i] In the translation: "his countrymen."

To this proposal, Protagoras replied: As you please. And Hippias, Prodicus, and the others told me by all means to do as I proposed. (342a)

LS: Why they changed the order from Prodicus–Hippias to Hippias–Prodicus is one of these riddles. Let us see where we stand now. Prodicus seems to have won the argument in substance, for this distinction between being and becoming is all but forgotten here. But Simonides deprives Protagoras of the fruit of his victory, for contrary to the agreement, Socrates will now engage in a long speech. He completely disregards the agreement, the law, the *nomos*. He acts on the view which he imputes to Simonides, that immoral view. I hope this is clear: there should be no long speeches any more. The law was framed with a view to Protagoras's vicious inclination, but of course, being a law, it applies to Socrates as well. And Socrates is the one who disregards it. Now it is a very long speech, and let us read quite a chunk of it.

Mr. Reinken:
Then now, I said, I will endeavor to explain to you my opinion about this poem of Simonides. There is a very ancient philosophy which is more cultivated in Crete and Lacedaemon than in any other part of Hellas, and there are more philosophers in those countries— (342a-b)

LS: No, more sophists: "And the largest number of sophists is in that country."

Mr. Reinken:
than anywhere else in the world. This, however, is a secret which these people deny; and they pretend to be ignorant, just because they do not wish to have it thought that they excel the other Hellenes by reason of their wisdom, like the Sophists of whom Protagoras was speaking, but that they surpass the rest by reason of their fighting ability and their courage, considering that if the reason of their superiority were disclosed, all men would be practicing their wisdom. (342a-b)

LS: "Would practice that," namely, wisdom. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And this secret of theirs has never been discovered by the imitators of Lacedaemonian fashions in other cities— (342b)

LS: In other words, he speaks of this fashion, the Laconizers, and Socrates could appear to be one of these Laconizers himself. He was regarded as such by people who did not make the necessary distinctions. Now Socrates was a conservative, to use present-day terminology; the Laconizers were conservative; hence Socrates was a Laconizer exactly like those people. It would be as if one would, say, identify Senator Dirksen with Robert Welch,[ii] but it would be even less reasonable. Good. Now go on.

[ii] Everett McKinley Dirksen (1896–1969) was a US Senator from Illinois from 1951–1969 and member of the Republican Party. Robert W. Welch, Jr. (1899–1985) is best known as a cofounder of the John Birch Society.

Mr. Reinken:
who go about with their ears bruised in imitation of them, and have their gloves[iii] bound on their arms, and are always in training, and wear short cloaks; for they imagine that these are the practices which have enabled the Lacedaemonians to conquer the other Hellenes. Now when the Lacedaemonians want to unbend and hold free conversation with their wise men— (343b-c)

LS: "Sophists."

Mr. Reinken:
sophists, and are no longer satisfied with mere secret intercourse, they drive out all these laconizers— (342c)

LS: No, they make an expulsion of foreigners, which was a practice of the Lacedaemonians, the Spartans, for which they were well known. At certain times they drove out all foreigners, and of course particularly those who want to imitate them. That is the reason given. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and any other foreigners who may happen to be in their country, and they hold a philosophical—

LS: No, they come secretly together: "in secrecy from the foreigners, they come together with the sophists."

Mr. Reinken:
and in secrecy from the foreigners, they come together with the sophists, and they themselves forbid their young men to go out into other cities—in this, they are like the Cretans—in order that they might not unlearn the lessons which they have taught them. (342c-d)

LS: Yes, "which the sophists teach them."

Mr. Reinken:
which the sophists teach them.

LS: Now this is a very strange thing. Socrates says here that there is a secret philosophy–sophistry,[iv] because the terms are used synonymously in Sparta—also in Crete, because they were two cities, the communities which have much in common. But the emphasis is altogether on Sparta: their sophistry, not their manliness or courage, is the secret reason for the Spartans military superiority. Now this implies of course in the first place a distinction between wisdom and courage; and remember that we have to think of the unity of all virtues. This distinction does of course not necessarily mean that they are separable, but that they are different. And the Spartans conceal their wisdom. There is a Greek word for

[iii] In the translation: "have the caestus [gloves] of boxers."
[iv] Strauss says "philosophy-dash-sophistry."

concealing one's wisdom, although it is not the original meaning of the term, and that is irony. The Spartans are fundamentally ironical people. Now Sparta is of course not a democracy. It is also against foreigners, as you see from this institution. A true city is a closed society. Socrates rejects implicitly the notion of Hippias, of the universal society consisting only of all wise men. A true *polis* is a closed society and not democratic. Socrates is clearly at variance with Athenian legality. If one cannot be in agreement with the legality, why one does not accept the principle of legitimacy underlying that particular legality. Is it clear? Because laws are democratic or oligarchic and so on and so on. And philosophy is used here synonymously with sophistry, as you have seen.

Now we come to the main point. Socrates opposes here in this speech, above all, Protagoras. The true sophists of old were not the men whom Protagoras had mentioned in 316: Homer, Hesiod, and so on. Protagoras has one kind of spiritual ancestry, which he had mentioned there. Here we hear of Socrates's spiritual ancestry. Socrates's spiritual ancestry is philosophic and political, whereas the ancestry of Protagoras is wholly nonpolitical, as you would see if you would look at the list. Now the relation of the philosophic to the political corresponds to the relation between the philosophic and gymnastics as you see here, or the relation of the mind and the body. The assumption that *the* fundamental distinction between human activity is based on the mind–body distinction is at the same time the philosophy–politics distinction. The sentence may be unclear, but the fundamental distinction on which Plato's work as a whole is based, and not only Plato, is that the fundamental distinction of respectable human activity is that of philosophy and politics. I mean not as we think today, where we would of course say: What about religion, what about art, what about economics?

Now what is the justification of this view? Every society is what it is by virtue of that to which it looks up. That is the basic principle. Today, liberal democracy versus communism. The first answer from anyone asked what is the difference would be: That stands for this, and the other stands for that. But that which it stands for is of course that to which it looks up. But that to which a society looks up may be a matter of knowledge, and then it is the true good. That would be wonderful. Or it may be a matter of mere opinion. This includes the case that all opinions, all opinions acceptable to society happen to be identical with what is known as true to those who think, because a true opinion is still an opinion [and] not the same as knowledge. We are then driven back to this: that the distinction between knowledge and opinion somehow corresponds to the distinction between mind and body. This is very strange at first hearing. I will give you only one modern illustration, taken from Hegel. Hegel used the German word for opinion, *meinung*, and by a pun he traced it to the German possessive pronoun *mein*: *meinung* comes from *mein*; opinion comes from what is only mine, not universal.[v] The ultimate basis of this Platonic view is that what is private, what is strictly speaking mine, is the body. I cannot now take up the question of where religion, art, and economics would belong according to this scheme. I will only say this, that from the classical point of view what we call economics would be of course subpolitical, and still more subphilosophic, whereas art and religion are somehow between the political and the philosophic. But this only in passing.

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[v] G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, Preface, par. 100 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 61.

Now let us go on where Socrates is striving. This much we must keep in mind: he is speaking here of his intellectual ancestry. That this is ironical goes without saying, because everything said is ironical; and only by thinking through can we distinguish between the ironical and nonironical. But even the ironical of course is never without its seriousness, without its underlying seriousness, as we will see. Now let us go on. Now in these cities, namely, in Sparta and Crete.

Mr. Reinken:
And in Lacedaemon and Crete not only men but also women have a pride in their high level of education. (342d)

LS: Yes, which foreshadows in a way, of course, the *Republic*.

Mr. Reinken:
And hereby you may know that I am right in attributing to the Lacedaemonians this excellence in philosophy and discourse: if a man converses with the most ordinary Lacedaemonian, he will find him seldom good for much in general conversation, but at the point of the discourse he will inject some notable saying, short and terse, with unerring aim, like a sharpshooter; and the person with whom he is talking seems to be like a child in his hands. And many of our own age and of former ages have noted that the true Lacedaemonian type of character has the love of wisdom even stronger than the love of physical exercise. (342d-e)

LS: Yes, true laconizing is much more philosophizing than love of gymnastics. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
They are conscious that only a perfectly educated man is capable of uttering such expressions.

LS: Yes. After all, Socrates has made an assertion without any support and now he gives us a sign, not a proof but an indication, a sign of the fact that the Spartans philosophize: their ability to say something well in terse sentences. Now we can also say in short sentences, brevity of speech: laconic it is still called, isn't it? Laconic expression is a sign of deep thought. So in other words, we see now a bit better why this is Socrates's ancestry, because Socrates is enamored of short speeches and Protagoras is enamored of long speeches. Yes, now?

Mr. Reinken:
Such were Thales of Miletus, and Pittacus of Mitylene, and Bias of Priene, and our own Solon, and Cleobulus of Lindon, and Myson of Chenae; and seventh in the catalogue of wise men was the Lacedaemonian Chilo. (343a)

LS: Yes, "and the seventh among them was said [to be] the Lacedaemonian Chilo." So in other words, it is not asserted that he was, but "it was said." These are the famous seven wise men. There are various catalogues of them; they are different, [but] we cannot go into

that. Now Socrates's ancestry is more directly the seven wise men of old, but as is indicated by the different treatment of the sole Spartan among them, this is not strikingly obvious. You see that Socrates, being an Athenian, assigns the central place to the Athenian legislator Solon. He was one of the wise men; whether Chilon was truly one of them is not quite clear. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
All these were lovers and emulators and disciples of the culture of the Lacedaemonians— (343a)

LS: So in other words, although none of them, so to speak, was a Spartan, Socrates maintains they all are pupils of true Spartanism, true Laconism. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:
and any one may perceive that their wisdom was of this character, consisting of short memorable sentences, which they severally uttered. And they met together and dedicated in the temple of Apollo at Delphi, as the first fruits of their wisdom, the far-famed inscriptions, which are in all men's mouths, "Know thyself," and "Nothing in excess."

Why do I say all this? I am explaining that this Lacedaemonian brevity was the style of ancient philosophy. Now there was a saying of Pittacus which was privately circulated and received the approbation of the wise, "Difficult is it to be good." And Simonides, who was ambitious of the fame of wisdom, was aware that if he could overthrow this saying, then, as if he had won a victory over some famous athlete, he would carry off the palm among his contemporaries. And if I am not mistaken, he composed the entire poem with the secret intention of damaging Pittacus and his saying. (343a-c)

LS: Yes. Now Pittacus, that man opposed by Simonides, is one of the seven; he belongs to Socrates's ancestry. Simonides opposes Pittacus, and Simonides belongs to Protagoras's ancestry, as you can see if you look up the passage in 316. The natural thing for Socrates would be to take the side of Pittacus, who belongs to his ancestry, and criticize Simonides as Protagoras did. But he does the opposite. Why? Well, because Protagoras had criticized Simonides and Socrates wishes to defeat Protagoras for the sake of Hippocrates, of course. Or is there a fundamental difference between Protagoras and his spiritual ancestor Simonides? Indeed there is: according to Protagoras, Simonides belongs to the sophists of old who concealed their being sophists, whereas Protagoras is the first to speak up, the first who does not conceal.

And now we get first this general picture. All sophist–philosophers of old, whether the Socratic ancestry or the Protagorean ancestry, were concealers. But there were two kinds of them, the Laconizers and the makers of long speeches. But both concealed. Now by coming to the assistance of Pittacus *or* Simonides, Socrates comes to the assistance of the concealers, this much is clear, against the enlighteners, as we can say. Now we have to see in the sequel why Socrates comes to the assistance of Simonides and not of Pittacus, who, after all, was also a concealer. But already now this question arises: Is there any connection between the issue of concealment/enlightenment and the question regarding virtue or the

teachability of virtue or the unity of virtue? I mean, it would be strange in a Platonic dialogue if this were a mere haphazard insertion and there were not a connection between the two things. We will find the solution, I hope, when we go on. Now?

Mr. Reinken:
Let us all unite in examining his poem— (343c)

LS: Socrates says, "all shall investigate." He had said formerly [that] all shall act as supervisors of Socrates and Protagoras, in 338e. But this is of course something slightly different from supervising, but they should indeed try. One can say to that extent Socrates means it quite literally: everyone should try to watch what Socrates is doing to the best of his powers. Good. Now begin again with this sentence.

Mr. Reinken:
All shall unite in examining his poem, and see whether I am speaking the truth. Simonides must have been a lunatic if, in the very first words of the poem, wanting to say only that to become good is hard, he inserted *men*, "on the one hand" ("on the one hand to become good is difficult"); there would be no reason for the introduction of *men* unless you suppose Simonides— (343c-d)

LS: *Men*, of course is the Greek word *men*—that is significant—which normally asks for a corresponding *de*. Socrates, *men*; Protagoras, *de*. We would not translate this in English. Socrates on the one hand said this, Protagoras on the other said that. Yes, good. But we cannot possibly go into elementary Greek grammar here. Good.

Mr. Reinken:
there would be no reason for the introduction of *men* unless you suppose Simonides to speak with a hostile reference to the words of Pittacus. Pittacus is saying, "Difficult is it to be good," and he, in refutation of this thesis, rejoins that the truly difficult thing, Pittacus, is to become good, not joining "truly" with "good," but with "difficult." Not that the hard thing is to be truly good, as though there were some truly good men, and there were others who were good but not truly good (this would be a very naive observation, and quite unworthy of Simonides)— (343d-e)

LS: No, it would be, "stupid." Needless to say that Socrates more than once uses this distinction between the truly good and the good; there is a question whether he is truly good himself. And I mean, this is quite obviously a joke, the whole thing. But go on.

Mr. Reinken:
but you must suppose him to make a poetic trajection of the word "truly" [*aletheōs*], construing the saying of Pittacus thus (and let us imagine Pittacus to be speaking and Simonides answering him): "O my friends," says Pittacus— (343e)

LS: No, "all human beings." Being a poet, he addresses the whole human race. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

"O ye humans," says Pittacus,[vi] "difficult is it to be good," and Simonides answers, "In that, Pittacus, you are mistaken; the difficulty is not to be good but, on the one hand, to become good, foursquare in hands and feet and mind, wrought without a flaw—that is difficult truly." (343e-344a)

LS: This is, as you see, a quotation from the poem of Simonides himself. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
This way of reading the passage accounts for the insertion of *men*, "on the one hand," and for the position at the end of the clause of the word "truly," and all that follows shows this to be the meaning. A great deal might be said to demonstrate the excellent composition of each detail of the poem, which is a charming piece of workmanship, and very finished, but such minutiae would be tedious. I should like, however, to point out the general outline and the intention of the poem, which is certainly designed in every part to be a refutation of the saying of Pittacus. (344a-b)

LS: You see the key point here: Simonides asserts against Pittacus that not being good but becoming good is hard. We have seen this issue before. That is to say, Socrates uses the distinction between being and becoming, to which he had referred in what we read last time, again. Yes, we leave it at this point. So up to this point we haven't heard anything new as far as the fundamental question is concerned. Now?

Mr. Reinken:
For he speaks in what follows a little further on as if he meant to argue prosaically that although there truly is a difficulty in becoming good, yet this is possible for a time, and only for a time. But having become good, to remain in a good state and be good, as you, Pittacus, affirm, is not possible, and is not granted to man; a god only has this blessing; "but man cannot help being bad when the force of circumstances overpowers him." (344b-c)

LS: Now Socrates does not continue as he did in the former passage, 340b, that according to Simonides being good in contradistinction to becoming good is easy. You remember that was the point there. In other words, after you have acquired the habit of self-control, it is easy to be self-controlled. On the contrary, he says now [that] being good, i.e., always remaining good, is impossible—a radically different interpretation. For man depends too much on fate. Good. Now let us see what this leads up to.

Mr. Reinken:
Now whom does the force of circumstances overpower in the command of a vessel? Not the layman, for he is always overpowered. And as one—

LS: "He is already overpowered to begin with," because of his complete ignorance.

Mr. Reinken:

[vi] Strauss compliments Mr. Reinken's reading here, saying "very good."

And as one who is already prostrate cannot be overthrown, and only he who is standing upright, but not he who is prostrate can be laid prostrate, so the force of circumstances can only overpower him who at some time or other has resources, and not him who is at all times helpless. The descent of a great storm may make the pilot helpless, or the severity of the season the farmer or the physician. For the good may become bad— (344c-d)

LS: Now wait a moment here. Now you see only experts, only resourceful men can be overthrown; the others are not even capable of being overthrown. And he gives three examples; in the center is the farmer who is overcome by a heavy season—in Greek *chalepē*, or a hard season. You see very clearly it has the meaning of bad, so that Socrates's point that hard is a kind of bad is again restored. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
for the good may become bad, as another poet witnesses: "The good are sometimes good and sometimes bad." But the bad does not become bad; he is necessarily always bad. So that when the force of circumstances overpowers the man of resources and wisdom and virtue, then he cannot help being bad. And you, Pittacus, are saying, "Difficult is it to be good." Now there is a difficulty in becoming good; and yet this is possible. But to be good is an impossibility—"For he who does well is the good man, and he who does ill is the bad." (344d-e)

LS: Now to what extent a good man—nay, man as such—will be good or bad depends on how he does, which in Greek is an ambiguous term which may mean how he acts and how he fares. But here the emphasis is on the second meaning: he depends on his fate, on chance. [3]We have seen examples: the heavy season, or storms. We may also say in this context [that] it depends on nature; or, to use a formula which Plato uses in the *Laws*: man is a plaything of the gods. This is not the whole story of Plato, but that is part of it. The passages in the *Laws*, if you want to look them up, are in 644d and 803c. Now if this is so, if man's goodness or badness depends entirely on his fate, what will become of education? After all, we must never forget the context. Now the answer is given in the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
But what constitutes "doing well" in writing? And what kind of activity makes a man good in writing? Clearly, learning it. (344e-345a)

LS: "The learning of letters," yes.

Mr. Reinken:
And what sort of well-doing makes a man a good physician? Clearly, learning the art of healing the sick. "But he who does ill is the bad." Now who becomes a bad physician? Clearly, he who is in the first place a physician, and in the second place a good physician; for he may become a bad one also. But none of us unskilled individuals can by any amount of doing ill become physicians, any more than we can become carpenters or anything of that sort. And he who by doing ill cannot become a physician at all clearly cannot become a bad physician. In like manner the good may become bad by time, or toil, or disease, or other accident (the only real doing ill is to be deprived of knowledge), but the bad man will

never become bad, for he is always bad, and if he were to become bad, he must previously have been good. (345a-b)

LS: Now let us stop here for a moment. Now we have the question: Man's goodness or badness depends on his fate, and then what becomes of education to virtue? Here we have the answer. Virtue is knowledge, or at least vice is lack of knowledge. And of course knowledge is acquired by learning, by a form of education. But—and now comes the key point—whether we can or cannot acquire learning, and having acquired it, keep it, exercise it, does not depend on us. While pure virtue is knowledge, knowledge is not omnipotent. It cannot guarantee its own condition. [4]This makes sense as far as it goes, but there is one obvious difficulty. Let us take the physician, say a top physician, and he is confronted with a hopeless case that he cannot heal, or he is a surgeon getting a heart attack while operating on a patient: Does he become by either of these two facts a bad physician? No. I mean, these are the limits of his art. So there is a difficulty here which will be cleared up, I think, in the sequel. Yes, now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Thus the words of the poem tend to show that on the one hand a man cannot be continuously good, but that he may become good and may also become bad. And again that "They are the best for the longest time whom the gods love." (345b-c)

LS: That seems to be also a quotation from a poem, probably from Simonides but not certainly. So whether a man is good or bad in a given case depends on chance, on things beyond his control. It depends on the gods; it has nothing to do with his previous virtue according to the statement here: "Those men are best, for most of the time, whom the gods love." Now that is not irrelevant in the context of this discussion. Does it imply that those men are worse whom the gods hate? At any rate, it would seem that if virtue depends on the favor of the gods, one must try to gain that favor. And how is that activity of gaining the favor of the gods called?

Student: Religion or piety.

LS: Piety. And this is of course then something different from justice, and this we must not forget. Yes. Now let us go on here, c4.

Mr. Reinken:
All this relates to Pittacus, as the sequel makes even clearer— (345c)

LS: "All this is said with a view to Pittacus, or against Pittacus." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
as the sequel makes even clearer, for he adds:

Therefore I will not throw away my span of life to no purpose in searching after the impossible, hoping in vain to find a perfectly faultless man among those who partake of the fruit of the broad-bosomed earth: if I find him, I will send you word. (345c)

LS: In other words, that is clearly jocular. No man can be bad because man is too much dependent on things—no man can be simply good because man is too dependent on circumstances beyond his control. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
(This is the vehement way in which he pursues his attack upon Pittacus throughout the whole poem):

But him who does no evil, voluntarily I praise and love; not even the gods war against necessity.

All this has a similar drift. (345d)

LS: But clearly the gods alone, to come back to this question he raised before, clearly the gods alone do not control man's fate: man's fate depends in the last analysis on necessity, with which even the gods cannot fight. We can also say he depends on nature. Which consequences this has regarding the status of piety is in no way developed. But this is a thought which one must consider. Now?

Mr. Reinken:
All this has a similar drift, for Simonides was not so ignorant as to say that he praised those who did no evil voluntarily as though there were some who did evil voluntarily. For no wise man, as I believe, will allow that any human being errs voluntarily, or voluntarily does evil and base actions; but they are very well aware that all who do evil and base things do them against their will. (345d-e)

LS: "Involuntarily." Yes?

Mr. Bruell: Is necessity then distinguished from chance?

LS: No, it is different from chance, because what is by necessity is of course not by chance.

Mr. Bruell: So that in a way . . .

LS: Yes, not quite, but there is a large variety of meanings, for example, insofar as *tuchē*, chance, is understood primarily in contradistinction to art, and what is not guaranteed by the art is to that extent a matter of chance. For example, you plant a plum tree and you do it according to the rules of the art of tree-planting, but you have no guarantee what the weather will be. And yet this weather business is a natural thing; although impossible to predict, [to] make any long-range prediction, yet it is natural. It's not so simple.

Now here is this passage to which we come now, it is a necessary consequence of the identification of virtue with knowledge or of vice with ignorance. If this is so, no one does the bad or base voluntarily. Is this clear? I mean, to be vicious, to do bad and base things

must be traced to ignorance, because vice is fundamentally ignorance. This statement of Socrates, for which he is very well known, that virtue is knowledge, has a great range of meaning; and to give you only one extreme, indicated by Marlowe in his *Jew of Malta*, the prologue, when he makes Machiavelli of all people say, "I hold there is no sin but ignorance."[vii] But Socrates meant it somewhat differently than Marlowe's Machiavelli, but still this must also be considered. No one chooses the bad and the base knowingly, voluntarily. But if he chooses it, he chooses it compelled by his ignorance: the bad or base appears to him as good, and he cannot but strive for what appears to him good. And he has to learn that there are other things which are good, which are better, and in the light of which these apparent goods would then appear to be evil. But he hasn't learned it, so he is ignorant. Now this case of the man who does bad things compelled by ignorance is obviously different from that of the physician who collapses while operating on a sick man, because that physician does not act badly from ignorance but is compelled to act badly by his body, by the collapse. Is it not clear? Yes?

Mr. Reinken: But is there a reconciliation of these two things, being good is impossible and vice proceeds from ignorance, if we say that the conditions of ignorance or knowledge are not under human control?

LS: Yes, all right. But still, what does it mean to say in the case of the physician or farmer or any other artisan of whom he talked, that he acted badly if something which has nothing to do with his art as art and with his competence as competence interferes with it?
I will—we are not yet at the end. The overall assertion is [that] there is no man who doesn't sin, to state it in biblical language; there is no man, however good, who does not do badly from time to time. There are people who always do badly, that is granted—which is of course an exaggeration, otherwise they could not possibly live if they did [5]badly always, but let us leave it at that. But there is no man who always does well. But there are various kinds of this not doing well, as is indicated by the [ship's] pilot whose art is thwarted by a storm which could not possibly have been foreseen. If it could have been foreseen, it was his fault to leave the harbor. But that is of course an assumption. And the case of the man who does something bad, wicked, low-grade because he didn't ever learn the rudiments of decent conduct. But this is of course not exhaustive; there are other cases. Yes?

Student: Is this a way of distinguishing the knowledge of virtue from the knowledge of art? One is a general kind of knowledge for which a man is ignorant—a man acts badly through ignorance, but it is a different kind of ignorance from the ignorance of a . . .

LS: Yes, but Plato was surely aware of the difference between what Aristotle later on came to call practical wisdom on the one hand, and art on the other. But there is no indication that he has this in mind here. He leaves it simply as the sweeping identification of virtue and knowledge and leaves it to us, at least here in the dialogue, to figure out what that means. And since the most common and striking examples of knowledge are the arts—the physician or the shoemaker or whoever else—I mean a man who is capable to give a perfectly clear account of what he is doing.

[vii] *The Jew of Malta*, prologue l.15.

Student: Well, then on the surface there is a great identity between virtue and the arts.

LS: Sure! One of the most striking things in the so-called early dialogues of Plato, [in] the first book of the *Republic*, the refutation of Thrasymachus, for example, turns entirely on this. But we must first see another case of doing badly which is discussed in the sequel where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
And Simonides never says that he praises him who does no evil voluntarily; the word "voluntarily" applies to himself. For he— (345e)

LS: Do you see that, this is of course a wholly arbitrary interpretation of the poem? But we don't have to worry about that, because Socrates will say later on [that] this whole business of interpretation of poems is irrelevant. We come to that later. Yes?[viii]

Mr. Reinken:
For he was under the impression that a good man might compel himself to love and praise another, and to be the friend and approver of another;[ix] and that there might be an enforced love, such as a man might feel to an unnatural father or mother, or country, or the like. (345e-346a)

LS: "Fatherland," yes.

Mr. Reinken:
Now bad men, when their parents or country have any defects, look on them with malignant joy, and find fault with them—

LS: Literally, "gladly," "gladly." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and find fault with them and expose and denounce them to others, under the idea that the rest of mankind will be less likely to take themselves to task and accuse them of neglect; and they blame their defects far more than they deserve, in order that the odium which is necessarily incurred by them may be increased. But the good man dissembles his feelings, and constrains himself to praise them; and if they have wronged him and he is angry, he pacifies his anger— (346a-b)

LS: It is again repeated, "with his parents or the fatherland." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
with his parents and fatherland. He pacifies his anger and is reconciled, and compels himself to love and praise his own flesh and blood. (346b)

[viii] The tape was changed at this point.
[ix] In the translation: "good man might often force himself to become the friend and approver of another."

LS: All right, "flesh and blood" is a bit too strong there. Now we have another and different case here which is the most important, as we will see. Here we have a good man who acts well—who acts well, as you see, knowingly: he knows how his parents and his fatherland are, but through self-compulsion. That is to say, we have here a case where a man does these things knowingly but not voluntarily, not gladly. Now what is this case? This action of this decent man is good, if unpleasing. It consists in concealing his loathing, in compulsorily loving and praising. That is an entirely different case. In the two former cases we had, first, someone acting badly under compulsion by fate, and then we had the case of acting badly under compulsion by ignorance. But here there is no such compulsion, at least not visibly, especially because there is no bad action at all: he acts well. That it is unfortunate to have undesirable parents is true but does not in itself affect the moral character of the action in this case. This is a clear case of acting well and knowingly, which is not acting voluntarily in the sense of gladly. And we see here a kind of presupposition that the best actions are those which are intrinsically good and at the same time done gladly. But why does this decent man who conceals the deficiencies of his parents or of his fatherland, why does he do that? What is his motivation?

Student: Justice?

LS: Yes. We would say, I believe, first today, but meaning the same thing: from a sense of duty. But that is in Greek from justice, the right, the proper thing to do. And you will see that he speaks also of the wicked [who] would gladly accuse their fatherland, whereas the good man would do it only with great misgivings; and even though he would not even openly accuse it, he would do that.[x] The problem of the *Crito* is present in this. One can here raise of course this other question: Does Socrates in particular hide the wickedness of Athens? In the *Gorgias*, he does the opposite. He brings out that all these great men, Themistocles, Pericles, and so on—not all, but this kind of man, that they are very bad, which is of course [blame] on Athens. . . . Now in the sequel, in the next few lines, we will get the solution of our riddle. But in order that we appreciate these two lines properly, let us see whether the riddle is understood, whether the difficulty is understood. Mr. Levy seems to be on the verge of a remark. Did you not have your arm raised?

Mr. Levy: Well, I've tried to avoid questioning, but—

LS: No, no, no, we'll get through all right. I have now a better judgment about what we can achieve or not achieve today than I had at the beginning of the class.

Mr. Levy: If you lived at a time when laws can be broken without much restraint if they are in the opinion of the breaker unjust, and we live in a time when we see extremely unjust laws . . . by certain people. So one wonders when you read something like Socrates, who himself might have broken the law once or twice . . . unjust—

LS: There is of course a great difference between stealthily breaking the law and openly breaking it because of its injustice. And the juster man would, I suppose, openly break it if he breaks it only because of its intrinsic injustice. If someone makes a false tax declaration,

[x] Namely, accuse his fatherland.

also thinking [that] there should not be such a terrible tax, then of course his justice might very well be questioned, because there are other ways of showing that one disapproves of that tax.

Mr. Levy: What about extremely unjust parents and fatherlands? Can you praise . . .

LS: That is such a question of very great delicacy; and there are apparently some limits beyond which—well, let me put it this way—beyond which respect is no longer possible, and that is a very bad situation. But still, I would say the situation is different if the individuals concerned are one's parents or whether they are some other people. You know? Surely there is a question here. Locke discusses it in his way in the *Civil Government*, second part, when he speaks of the family. Well, I have stated this at some length in my chapter on Locke in *Natural Right and History*;[xi] I couldn't state it now. But this is surely a question. In other words, the biblical commandment "Honor father and mother" leads to difficulties in such extreme cases; and whether the fatherland has the same status in these matters as the parents, especially from a biblical point of view, [6]is of course a long question. But Socrates states it in the *Crito* quite clearly: if he had disapproved of Athens thoroughly, radically, he could have emigrated from Athens to another city; but by staying there he admitted that Athens was at least tolerably good and he had no longer this ultimate excuse, the simple badness of the city.

Now what is the problem with which we are concerned? Simonides is made to say that being good, i.e., always being good, is impossible. But how good or bad a man can be depends on his fate—and by this he does not merely mean social conditions, that goes without saying; he means at least as much the natural conditions. But the examples which we receive, which were given to us: the man, the physician who kills a man on whom he operates because he, the physician, suffers a heart attack while operating when there is no other physician around, obviously one cannot blame him as a physician for that. It is wholly beyond his control. And the other case where someone does something wrong from sheer ignorance, then it is perfectly possible to say—well, according to Socrates's simple assertion, it is always innocent, because ignorance means here ignorance of the law rather than of fact, [and] then he cannot be blamed for that. But here we have a different case, a case of the decent son of his parents or of his fatherland, who, from decency, from justice conceals the defects of his parents or his fatherland. And yet of course the whole thing is distasteful to him, naturally. Where does the badness of the action come in? Unless you would identify the good with the pleasant, and hitherto we have not the right to do so. Now let us read the sequel. It will make sense.

Mr. Reinken:
And Simonides, as is probable, considered that he himself had often had to praise and magnify a tyrant or the like, not of his own free will but by such constraint— (346b)

LS: Yes, "but under compulsion." Here we have the solution of the riddle. Here Simonides, a good man acting badly and knowingly—he knew that this tyrant was an abominable scoundrel—but not voluntarily i.e., not gladly. Now such a man can of course justly be

[xi] Locke, *Second Treatise*, secs. 52, 65–67, 69, 71–72; Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 218–19.

blamed, in the language of our century, as a collaborator. Why did he do that? Praising a tyrant and others of the same stamp is simply bad. He does not have the excuse which the son has or the citizen of the country. The blamable badness consists in concealing the badness of the bad: he presents the tyrant as a wonderful man, and he knows that he is the opposite of wonderful. Now what is the motive of Simonides and such like people in such like situations? He did it under compulsion. Is this also—yes?

Mr. Reinken: Maybe he wanted to make the tyrant become less bad.

LS: Yes, but the more obvious thing is, of course, what? We know a bit how people behave under tyrannical government.

Mr. Reinken: To refrain from killing Simonides.

LS: Fear, fear. Lack of courage. So this would indicate at least, as we have seen on another occasion, that wisdom and courage do not necessarily go together, as common sense tells us anyway, but since we are here confronted with Socrates's thesis that the virtues, all virtues are inseparable, this has a great weight. Yes?

Student: But is fear of tyrant a lack of courage? This fear is to a great extent rational . . .

LS: Yes, but it must be out of fear to do bad or disgraceful things. That is the question. So in other words, if someone runs away from a tiger, then he doesn't do anything disgraceful, he only does something reasonable. But if he runs away from the enemy, and if he is a soldier the enemy may be much more dangerous than the tiger, the greater danger of the enemy is no excuse. You see also that in this case, which is the decisive case because this is the case where Simonides himself is involved, there is nothing of self-compulsion, that he compelled himself: he was compelled by others, by the tyrant and so on. Now Simonides surely, whatever the Spartans may have thought about that, regards wisdom separable from courage or manliness, and Socrates seems to agree here.

Now there is something else involved which is more important, and that is that there is a difference between the good and the pleasant. What the son did to his parents was good but very unpleasant. But this leads us to a distinction of two kinds of virtue: those in which generally speaking the good is identical with the pleasant; and those in which generally speaking the good differs from the pleasant. In other words, those virtues in which voluntariness predominates, and those in which compulsion predominates. I remind you of the emphasis put on compulsion and punishment in Protagoras's account of political virtue. And I suggest now this link-up between what we are reading now and the context of the dialogue. These things— [LS writes on the blackboard] Perhaps Socrates's inability hitherto to prove this identity is connected with the fact that these kind of virtues are of a different kind, that one of them is essentially voluntary and the other is essentially compulsory. May I remind you also of the compulsory character of the whole dialogue: Socrates compelled by Hippocrates, by his responsibility in regard to Hippocrates, by his justice, by his sense of duty. Yes?

Student: Well, I don't understand. You mean that justice and piety on the one hand are more compulsory than moderation and wisdom on the other hand?

LS: From Simonides's point of view, I believe so.

Same Student: Well, can you really distinguish moderation that way when you say that—

LS: Well, there is another way of showing that, for example, from a different point of view: the virtues which have naturally pleasant consequences, and the opposite vices naturally unpleasant consequences.

Same Student: Piety might have . . .

LS: Justice is more important here in this connection; the question of piety is only touched upon. And you know the simple example: if you overeat, there may not be any witnesses, you may be alone on an island.

Same Student: Yes, I see the point.

LS: You get this one. I believe it is connected with that. And now let us make a somewhat broader reflection at this point. Socrates is engaged in a contest with Protagoras. What seemed to be a mere attempt to elicit from Protagoras some information about his curriculum and the fee for Hippocrates turned into a contest with Protagoras. Now here Socrates vindicates Simonides's critique of Pittacus against Protagoras's critique, but in doing so he shows the difference between these two kinds of virtue.

Now there was another difference between Socrates and Protagoras which came to our attention today, partly before [as well]: Socrates stands for short speeches; Protagoras stands for long speeches. And we have now gotten a different indication from Socrates's long speech about Laconism. The difference is that between speaking disguisedly, as both Socrates's ancestry did and Protagoras's ancestry did, and speaking frankly as Protagoras claimed to do. Now the link-up between the two points, I believe, is this: the question of how to speak, frankly or disguisedly, provides *the* example which shows the difference between the two groups of virtue. If we disregard entirely the consideration of justice, it is natural to speak frankly—to say how you feel, that is a good thing—but then considerations of the feelings of others and so on, consideration of justice limit what we can frankly do.

Now it would be good if we could complete our reading of this part. Virtue is knowledge. There is some agreement as to this between Socrates and Protagoras and the sophists in general. But the key point which Socrates makes is the limited power of knowledge, not merely with regard to seasons and tempests but also and above all against the power of the unwise. This is Aristotle's diagnosis of the fundamental mistake of the sophists toward the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics*: that the sophists reduced political science to rhetoric, the art of making speeches, because they believed that making speeches is enough for governing a multitude.

Now here at this point is where the problem of justice becomes acute for the wise men in the following form: How should they conduct themselves toward the unwise? Should they try to rule them—the *Republic*, philosopher-kings? Or should they accept being ruled by the unwise? That seems to be against nature. But if they accept being ruled by the unwise because of the manifest impossibility of the philosophers ever becoming kings, that means of course that the question of how to speak becomes the key question: in the felicitous phrase of Mr. Cropsey, "philosophy tempers its tongue and society stays its hand." That is a big deal; in a way, the biggest deal that exists. Good. Now let us try to finish this section where we left off, from 346b8.

Mr. Reinken:
and he also wishes to imply to Pittacus that he does not censure him because he is censorious.

For I am satisfied (he says) when a man is neither bad nor excessively foolish, and when he knows justice (which is the health of cities[xii]), and is of sound mind, I will find no fault with him, for I am not given to finding fault, and there are innumerable fools.

(Implying that if someone delighted in censure he has abundant opportunity of finding fault.) (346c)

LS: Yes, let us stop here for a moment. One must compel oneself to praise—he does not say here to love—the unworthy. One must avoid as much as possible blaming the unworthy or the unwise. Now Socrates begins to cover up the difficulty which he had laid bare. One must be satisfied with those who are good, that is to say, who act badly only if compelled to do so by hard luck, which is of course a very tall order, because how far does . . . go? Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
"All things are good with which evil is unmingled." In these latter words he does not mean to say that all things are good which have no evil in them, as you might say, "All things are white which have no black in them," for that would be ridiculous; but he means to say that he accepts and finds no fault with a moderate or intermediate state.

I do not hope (he says) to find a perfectly blameless man among those who partake of the fruits of the broad-bosomed earth (if I find him, I will send you word); in this sense I praise no man. But he who is moderately good, and does no evil, is good enough for me, who love and approve every one.

(and here observe—) (346c-d)

LS: "And does nothing bad." That is another great change which Socrates makes. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

[xii] In the translation: "states"

(and here observe that he uses a Lesbian word, *epainēmi*, approve, because he is addressing Pittacus—"I love and approve every one voluntarily, who does no evil": and that the stop should be put after "voluntarily"); but there are some whom I involuntarily praise and love. And you, Pittacus, I would never have blamed, if you had spoken what was moderately good and true; but I do blame you because, putting on the appearance of truth, you are speaking inordinately falsely about the highest matters." And this, I said, Prodicus and Protagoras, I take to be the meaning of Simonides in this poem. (346d-e)

LS: Yes. One must be satisfied with, meaning that one must praise gladly those who are good, i.e., who do nothing bad, which implies there is no necessity of man ever doing anything bad, contrary to what we have heard before. But one must sometimes praise and love involuntarily those who do bad things. Differently stated, one must sometimes act badly by praising and loving those who act badly. The case of legitimate acting badly is that of praising and loving those who illegitimately act badly. That is complicated. In this remark toward the end of this phrase here, "this seems to me, Prodicus and Protagoras, said I": that is very emphatic, to make clear that now Socrates is speaking, whereas before when he spoke of "I," it was Simonides. So he reminds us of this. Now?

Mr. Reinken:
Hippias said: I think, Socrates, that you have given a very good explanation of the poem; but I have also an excellent interpretation of my own which I will propound to you, if you so desire. (347a)

LS: Socrates had addressed only Protagoras and Prodicus, Protagoras because he had brought up Simonides, and Prodicus because he was a countryman of Pittacus attacked by Simonides. But Hippias feels left out and he tries to muscle in, but a man with much stronger muscles prevents that.

Mr. Reinken:
Nay, Hippias, said Alcibiades; not now, but at some other time. At present we must abide by the compact which—

LS: More literally, "now it is just." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
now it is just to abide by the compact which was made between Socrates and Protagoras, to the effect that as long as Protagoras is willing to ask, Socrates should answer—

LS: No, literally, "if Protagoras is still willing to ask."

Mr. Reinken:
if Protagoras is still willing to ask, Socrates should answer; or that if he would rather answer, then that Socrates should ask. (347b-c)

LS: You see, this "still willing" is clear, because Protagoras probably got enough [LS laughs] . . . disturbed entirely to his discomfiture. You see also that Alcibiades acts on

behalf of justice while usurping the . . . He decides that Hippias can't say anything, and no one had ever given him that authority. But we may also say in justification of Alcibiades, and Socrates's quasi-love for him, that in acting so unjustly he acts wisely, because this would be only a disturbance. So it is clear from the last remark that the whole intermezzo in which Protagoras tried to assert his supremacy and was given the privilege of addressing questions to Socrates is over. Protagoras is completely defeated, and especially in the poetry discussion on his own ground, because he said: I am the bigshot. Well, he didn't say that, but he meant it: That is my forte. And, well, it proved to be his great weakness.

Now Socrates has vindicated Simonides's critique of Pittacus by hook and by crook. He has refuted Protagoras's interpretation and criticism of Simonides's poem. That is clear by now. And now he goes even further in the sequel, which we will discuss next time: he turns now to attacking the very notion of interpreting and criticizing poetry. Protagoras's criticism, literary criticism as we might say, might have been bad in this particular case, but it might be in itself reasonable. Socrates does not leave Protagoras this last refuge. And then at this point the last section of the dialogue begins, the last section where, under the assumption that this is all proven, the status of the remaining virtue has to be taken up, and that is courage. If these four virtues are all identical with each other, can courage be left in the cold? Of course not. And this leads then to a new discussion, and with quite a few very amazing happenings. Is there any point that one or the other of you would like to raise? Mr. Dry?

Mr. Dry: You suggested that [7]courage was different from wisdom in the example of Simonides having to praise a tyrant. That was the third example in that section; that seemed to be slightly different from the case of a son having to praise bad parents or even a fatherland. . . .

LS: The obvious difference is this. Even today, then . . . if someone is a collaborator or a quisling, or however you call that, this is bad. But if someone defends his own country, his own people, against more or less just or unjust attacks . . . he isn't bad. That's the point.

Mr. Dry: Right, but why would the two different—

LS: In other words, Simonides, by living with these tyrants and enjoying their dishes, the food and the drink, and the monetary rewards, exposed himself to justified criticism. A wise man doesn't do these things. Well, he was a very witty man and made jokes about it, and when he was asked, What is better, wealth or wisdom? he said wealth, because the wise are to be found at the doors of the wealthy, and not the wealthy at the doors of the wise.[xiii] In other words, he was a man not of the strictest morality, to put it mildly.

Mr. Dry: Well, then maybe this placement by Plato, or by Socrates, tempers a little bit the criticism that we might have of Simonides, for the previous two examples were more justified, the fatherland and parents.

[xiii] See Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, 2.16 (1391a8–12).

LS: Obviously, and I would say it is the only clear case of someone acting badly and blamably, because the man who acts badly because of ignorance is not strictly speaking blamable. Well, we will continue next time.

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[1] Deleted "**Mr. Reinken:** which in a Lesbian, who has—" (341c)
LS: No, is this the point? Let me see. Let me find it. 341d2. Here: "you are entirely mistaken."
Mr. Reinken: Protagoras?
LS: Yes, my fault."
[2] Deleted "in"
[3] Deleted "For example"
[4] Deleted "But"
[5] Moved "always"
[6] Moved "as the parents."
[7] Deleted "you brought out that"

Session 13: May 10, 1965

What Is Courage?

(347c-352c)

Leo Strauss: Well, let's begin. I am not entirely satisfied, to put it mildly, with my interpretation of the Simonides scene which I suggested last time. I shall propose another one which I think is better, but quite a few difficulties still remain. The result of the debate between Socrates and Protagoras on the various virtues was this: justice and piety seem to be more or less identical; moderation and wisdom seem to be more or less identical. But the two groups, whether they are identical or not remains obscure. In order to simplify the issue, we could say this: the relation of decency and prudence (in the vulgar sense of the word prudence) remains obscure, or if you please, of honesty and policy. Now then we came to the litigation scene. Socrates proved to be good at winning victories, i.e., to be prudent, but he acted unjustly. Yet he did this from justice. So this shows that in one respect honesty is the best policy, but they are not identical somehow. And we can say: prudence unequal to justice.

Then the Simonides scene. No one is always good; our goodness or badness depends on our fate. Therefore we must not expect too much from man. The good, i.e., the wise, are compelled by fate to act badly from time to time. More particularly, it is our duty sometimes to compel ourselves to praise and love bad superiors, the parents, or the fatherland, i.e., to conceal our thoughts and feelings. Justice demands this. But also unjust rulers, tyrants, sometimes compel wise men to praise them, i.e., to conceal their thoughts. Prudence demands it. Now the wise are always subject to the unwise; therefore it would seem they must always conceal their thoughts. Two conclusions follow from this: Protagoras's claim to candor is untenable, as we know anyway; secondly, justice seems to be different from prudence–wisdom. But the distinction between justice and prudence as developed here is equivalent to the distinction between self-compulsion in the case of the parents, and compulsion in the case of the tyrant. Now is this distinction between self-compulsion and compulsion tenable in the last analysis? If not, justice would be identical with prudence in the wider sense: there would be the unity of virtue, as Socrates contends. In that case, the Simonides section would supply the missing proof of the unity of virtue. But, as I say, I cannot swear that this is the case. This remains a difficulty. Now let us turn then immediately to the sequel, so that we make some headway, although we will proceed a little bit more slowly today than we did last time. We left off at 347b7. Alcibiades had just silenced Hippias who wanted to muscle in. Now, yes.

Mr. Reinken:
[Soc.:] I said: I wish Protagoras either to ask or answer as he is inclined. (347b-c)

LS: Yes. Now although from before it is rather clear that Protagoras had had enough of questioning Socrates as well as of being questioned by Socrates, Socrates leaves him the

choice, the choice between two evils, of which one doesn't know which is the lesser or greater. And surely a bad spot for a teacher of well-advisedness to be in. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
But I would rather have done with poems and odes, if he does not object, and come back to the question about which I was asking you at first, Protagoras, and by your help make an end of that investigation. (347c)

LS: Now Socrates proposes then, [1]on his part, a change of the subject matter, a return to Socrates's subject and an abandonment of Protagoras's subject. Now what is the ground on which he proposes that? That we may see in the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
The talk about poetry seems to me like a commonplace entertainment at the banquets of the vulgar who, because they are not able to converse—

LS: Now one second. [2]Protagoras's subject is a low thing, Socrates says now. Socrates is no longer even polite. After having defeated Protagoras's particular use of Simonides's poem, he rejects now this whole kind of pursuit. He [3]also in a way disowns his own interpretation of Simonides. After having proven the impossibility of frankness to unwise rulers, Socrates himself becomes entirely frank to Protagoras, who of course is not his ruler in any sense. Yes? Now he puts it more precisely in the sequel, about these low-class banquets. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
the vulgar, who, because they are not able to converse with or amuse one another, while they are drinking, with the sound of their own voices and conversation— (347c-d)

LS: Yes. "Nor" would be more literal: "neither through themselves nor through their own voice and speeches." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
by reason of their stupidity—

LS: "Their lack of education."

Mr. Reinken:
their lack of education, raise the price of flute-girls, hiring for a great sum the voice of a flute instead of their own breath, to be the medium of intercourse among them. (347d)

LS: Now let us see. Now these low-class banquets in which people have nothing to contribute by themselves nor by their voice and speeches: why nothing by themselves? Because they are poor and yet they can pay for very expensive flute girls? This seems [4]absurd. Yet let us consider not the symposium, the banquet, but the *synousia*, the unions to which the banquets are compared. The low-class companions do not have to pay for the poems which they interpret or criticize; they may have to pay a lot for Protagoras's

interpretation if he is in, but not for the poem. And their "beings-together" are cheap then in every respect: it doesn't cost them any money to get hold of these poems, nor do they have to make any intellectual effort to speak of. Now what about the high-class banquets of which he speaks now?

Mr. Reinken:
But where the company are real gentlemen and men of education, you will see no flute-girls, nor dancing-girls, nor harp-girls, and they have no nonsense or games, but are contented with one another's conversation, of which their own voices are the medium, and which they carry on by turns and in an orderly manner, even though they consume a lot of wine. (347d-e)

LS: Now at these high-class banquets, no flute-girls. The reason: they drink a lot, but no disorderly conduct. In the low-class banquets they do not drink a lot because they are poor, and they engage in disorderly conduct. Well, those of you who have read Plato's *Banquet*, or for that matter Xenophon's *Banquet,* will have an illustration of what a top banquet is. We know also of course symposiums in this country where is there is no disorderly conduct, but on the other hand, also people do not drink much because they have the cocktail parties afterwards, which is not an improper comparison. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And a company like this of ours, as men such as we profess to be—

LS: "Which most of us profess to be."

Mr. Reinken:
most of us profess to be do not require the help of another's voice, or of the poets whom you cannot interrogate about the meaning of what they are saying; people who cite them declaring, some that the poet has one meaning, and others that he has another, and the point which is in dispute can never be decided. This sort of entertainment they decline—

LS: Now literally "they," these people cannot decide on this subject, they cannot . . . Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
This sort of entertainment they decline and prefer to talk with one another, and put one another to the proof in conversation. And these are the models which I desire that you and I should imitate. Leaving the poets and keeping to ourselves, let us try the mettle of one another and make proof of the truth in conversation. (347d-348a)

LS: Now the poets here are compared to the flute girls in the example. Socrates does not speak of the works of other wise men. And also the discussion of the poets is useless in the case of people like the majority of those present. It can easily be read as a simple rejection of reading and studying books altogether. But this is not quite the same, because if Plato had discouraged the studying of books altogether, why did he himself write books? There is a problem in writing; he indicated this even here, earlier in 329a to b, but

especially in the *Phaedrus*.[i] Now those who would like to have some further evidence about this question should read in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, book 1, chapter 6, paragraphs 13 and 14 especially, where Socrates is described as reading with his friends the books of the wise men of old.

Now Socrates says here they must imitate the banquets of gentlemen. Clearly, no drunkenness, no disorderly conduct, no brawl, although we had something like a brawl before. But the comparison implies that there is a kind of intoxication, otherwise it would be somewhat far-fetched. Now what is that? What is the intoxication here? Or what is comparable to intoxication in the two cases? What does intoxication do to men? I mean all kinds of things, disorderly conduct, you know, but there are also some other things.

Student: Loosens their tongue?

LS: Exactly. Candor. And this is necessary. You remember the long discussions of candor in connection with Protagoras's ancestry and Socrates's ancestry. *The* discussion of drinking in Plato's work occurs in the first two books of the *Laws*, which are called the speech about wine, where this loosening of the tongue is an especially important thing. Now Socrates has disposed of this whole pursuit of which Protagoras is so proud, the study and criticism of poetry, and now what is his further proposal, positive proposal?

Mr. Reinken:
If you have a mind to ask, I am ready to answer; or if you would rather, do you answer, and give me the opportunity of resuming and completing our unfinished argument." (348a)

LS: So Socrates does not simply refuse to answer further questions of Protagoras, not even regarding poetry, but he makes it practically impossible for Protagoras to raise such questions by saying, in effect: If you want to act like low-class people, it is all right with me. Who would go on under these conditions? Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
I made these and some similar observations—

LS: All right. You see, Socrates doesn't tell us what these other observations are. He is frank to Protagoras, but not altogether frank or complete to the comrade to whom he tells the story. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
but Protagoras would not distinctly say which he would do. (348a-b)

LS: Naturally, because he is in a tough spot: whichever he chooses, whichever way he chooses, he will be in a bad position. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

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[i] *Phaedrus* 258e ff.

Thereupon Alcibiades turned to Callias and said: Do you think, Callias, that Protagoras is fair in refusing to say whether he will or will not answer? for I certainly think that he is unfair. He ought either to proceed with the argument or distinctly to refuse to proceed, that we may know his intention; and then Socrates will be able to discourse with someone else, and the rest of the company will be free to talk with one another. (348b)

LS: "Or somebody else will argue with somebody else." In other words, conversation, dialogues we are going to have, perhaps without Protagoras altogether. Protagoras is completely frustrated, as you see, and he becomes a mere object. His fate will be decided by Alcibiades and the others. Now Alcibiades puts an ultimatum to him: Put up or shut up. Alcibiades is responsible for the continuation of the dialogue after the end of the Simonides section, and again here. Now what does Protagoras—he has to say something. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
I think that Protagoras was really made ashamed by these words of Alcibiades, and when the prayers of Callias and some of the others were superadded, he was at last induced to argue, and said that I might ask and he would answer. (348c)

LS: Yes. He is completely defeated, because both Socrates's adherent, Alcibiades, and Protagoras's adherent, Callias, urge him to continue the conversation, and he lacks the strength to say that he would be the one who does the questioning. He is completely licked. Now Hippias—you see here it says [5]"and almost all others" (at least that does come out in the translation) and Callias asks him. Well, I bet that Hippias did not urge on Protagoras, for he would have been [only] too glad to be a discussant.

Now we come now at this point to the last section of the dialogue, and this is a proper place for summarizing what we know about the plan of the work as a whole. I read it to you as I have it in my statement:

I. Socrates and the comrade
II. Socrates and Hippocrates
III. Socrates and Protagoras, and that is of course the bulk of the work, and this has seven subdivisions:[6]
    1. Prior to the talk with Protagoras, i.e., when Socrates describes the scene
    2. Socrates's private talk with Protagoras
    3. Protagoras's reply to Socrates's public question and his long speech
    4. The debate between Socrates and Protagoras
    5. The litigation scene
    6. The discussion of Simonides's poem; and finally
    7. The continuation of the debate between Socrates and Protagoras

The Hippocrates section is the central section, and we will get some further proof of this soon. Now Socrates starts this last section. and let us see how he takes it up. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

So I said: Do not imagine, Protagoras, that I have any other interest in asking questions of you but that of clearing up my own problems as they arise. For I think that Homer was very right in saying that "When two go together, one sees before the other," for all men who have a companion are readier in deed, word, or thought; but if a man "sees a thing when he is alone," he goes about straightway seeking until he finds someone to whom he may show his discoveries, and who may confirm him in them. (348d-e)

LS: Yes. Now Socrates's desire to converse is inspired by his desire to learn something: this is the highest purpose for which men need other men, in order to understand. The desire for wisdom, a selfish desire, leads to the social activity of conversation, or, as the Latin proverb has it: *docendo discimus*, by teaching we learn. Now the verse here quoted is in the tenth book of the *Iliad*, 224 following, Diomedes speaking. And Diomedes, knowing that he needs a companion, chooses Odysseus as his companion. Similarly, Socrates chooses Protagoras as his companion. Socrates, who had been the Odysseus before, as we have seen, ceases to be Odysseus. And so Protagoras becomes now Odysseus, and we must see what this means. "Homer says," says Socrates: in fact, Homer's Diomedes says it. So if we follow this precedent, can we ascribe to Plato what his characters say—say, Protagoras or whoever else? Or can we ascribe to Plato only the wise things which his characters say? Well, then we must be wise before we can say what Plato says. That is a great difficulty. We act naturally on that principle and we would not ascribe a manifest stupidity to Plato, and even if it is said by Socrates, we would say: Of course, that's ironic. This is commonsensical enough, but it needs a clear principle, and therefore one cannot leave it at this. We must think a bit more about it. Yes. Now, where we left off.

Mr. Reinken:
And I would rather hold discourse with you than with any one, because I think that no man can better investigate most things which a good man may be expected to investigate, and in particular virtue. For who is there, but you?—who not only claim to be a good man and a gentleman, for many are this, and yet have not the power of making others good—whereas— (349d-e)

LS: Yes, "claim" is not quite it: "who do not only yourself believe to be a gentleman." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
not only believe to be a good man and a gentlemen, for many are this, and yet have not the power of making others good—whereas you are not only good yourself, but also able to make others good. Moreover such confidence have you in yourself that, although other Sophists conceal their profession, you proclaim openly in the face of all Hellas that you are a Sophist or teacher of virtue and education, and are the first who demanded pay in return. (348d-349a)

LS: Now let us wait here for a second. So, since Socrates is concerned with learning something, he is especially concerned with conversing with a man of Protagoras's wisdom; that goes without saying. But what is the implication? Insofar as he is concerned

with wisdom, he would never converse with the comrade to whom he tells the story, nor with Hippocrates, or for that matter with Crito, or Euthyphro, or Glaucon, Adeimantus and the others. Those conversations are not due to his desire for wisdom but to his desire to be helpful to others. And this is the simple proof that since the desire to be helpful to others is the highest form of justice, wisdom and justice are two different things. You see, we must not only listen to what Socrates says about the various virtues; we must also see what we observe here, what is presented to us. Now by ridiculing Protagoras here rather obviously, Socrates makes clear that his conversation with Protagoras too will not make Socrates wiser. [7]But why does he converse with Protagoras, if not in order to become wiser?

Student: For the sake of Hippocrates.

LS: Hippocrates. Again, a just act. Justice, not wisdom. [This] again shows a difference between justice and wisdom. Socrates is concerned with both wisdom and justice. These two virtues may be inseparable; they are surely not identical. Now he said here—in this long statement here which we have just read, at the end of it he speaks of the peculiarity or as we say of the "originality" of Protagoras. In what does it consist? According to Protagoras's original claim, it consisted in what?

Mr. Reinken: In being the first to proclaim himself.

LS: In other words, in his candor. Now Socrates, as we see here, does not leave to Protagoras even this question of a claim to eminence. The originality, what he did first, was to teach virtue for money. Now Protagoras's motive for teaching or for conversing is neither concern for wisdom, because he regards himself as wise in advance, nor justice, but money and reputation. Perhaps he is concerned with justice indirectly, namely, with the justice of others, so that they will pay him his honorarium. After all, he has no way of forcing them to pay. I remind you of the question we discussed earlier in regard to 327b2, where the manuscript reading generally discarded in the fourth century makes very much sense: that he is concerned with the justice of the others. But you must look it up at home; we cannot go into that. So this is now clear, and now he turns to the original question. Yes?

Student: Your explanation of the last speech of Socrates is a good illustration of the principle you apply in reading Plato: part of the paragraph being the truth, the simple truth of explaining Socrates's character, and why he converses. He converses for wisdom and justice.

LS: Yes.

Same Student: But then he took part of it also as part of Socrates's irony, namely, that . . .

LS: But where does he say that Protagoras converses with Socrates in order to become wise?[8]

Same Student: No, I meant that Socrates says he is conversing with Protagoras to become wise. But you disregarded that [as] ironic. . . .

LS: I did not do this merely because I had the impression, but because the whole previous happenings show that Socrates cannot learn much from these methods, or anything to speak of, from Protagoras.

Same Student: What shows you that his reasons for the discussion in the first place are really, truly spoken?

LS: Because it makes sense. [9]All of us, if we have an insight, however sound it may seem to us[10], if no one else listens to it, ever, then we begin to wonder whether we are not crazy. So there is a necessity for that.

Same Student: There seems to be great difficulties in your writings, and wasn't it you who pointed out that some of the things Plato says only a very few could ever understand?

LS: But a few are still some. [Laughter]

Same Student: These very few might be spread out across the ages. . . .

LS: That is a difficulty, surely. But still there is a difficulty here and there is no, how should I say it, no mechanical way out. But there is no question that we need others to test our own view, because if there are only my views, then I may have hallucinations of sorts and they may be sheer nonsense. At least to some extent, this test is absolutely necessary. If one can show that something follows from certain premises necessarily, and others granting the premises deny the conclusion, then the question arises whether they are not prevented by a hallucination of theirs, by a prejudice, from concluding this. But this presupposes still this argument with the others.

Same Student: You wrote about that in one of your works, and said that the only love between men . . . you have to love them, but because you love them you are apt to overlook some of their inconsistencies and let the love stand in the way of the truth. You have to leave the love . . . in the marketplace and speak to those who don't love you, but in either case . . . the man who loves you will make his love overcome—

LS: That is a danger, and we have no mechanical criteria. This risk we have to take.

Same Student: Isn't it possible that we must ultimately be skeptics as to our abilities?

LS: No, but always be willing to reconsider. I mean, skepticism comes from the Greek word *skepsis,* and this means considering, looking at. As Socrates says: Nothing like having another look at it. This kind of skepticism is of course the opposite of that lazy skepticism which says: We don't know, we can't know; let's do something else. Let us—

I don't know what—let's . . . But the industrious skeptic says . . . let us examine it again, even if we are quite sure of that. I mean, there is something which this has in common with the posture ascribed to modern science. But the way in which this posture is described, especially by the logical positivists, common sense is absent, whereas common sense is present in this old *skepsis*. A merely historical fact: Plato founded the Academy, and after some generations it became the new academy, a skeptic school; and later on it became a dogmatic school. Well, Plato's Academy proper was neither skeptical in that sense, nor dogmatic; it was open-minded. Mr. Rotella?

Mr. Rotella: In this relationship between wisdom and justice, don't you think that it is something that follows from the fact that in a sense it is just for Protagoras to set a fee? Or at least that's a manifestation of justice, because he has wisdom. He has wisdom; therefore in his intercourse with others he has to take fees, he can't learn a thing from them.

LS: Yes, but could he not, simply from humanity, from human kindness communicate his wisdom to the others?

Same Student: This is a problem. I thought—

LS: Yes, if he is very poor and would starve, we surely would not expect him to do that; but one could also say that these young men who are wealthy would surely not permit him to starve if they derived such great benefit from him. And he shouldn't make it a condition, but, as he says, he did. You remember, he asks them to pay him whatever they think is fair or they only have to go to the temple and to swear. That is the reason why he must foster piety among them, lest they might commit perjury and he would not get any money. Yes?

Student: Would you think that a wise man, in teaching another person how to grow up to his wisdom, would learn even as teacher?

LS: That is also—that's true. In other words, how would one have to say it from Socrates's point of view? He would learn something about the soul, the human soul, a major subject.

Same Student: And he would also learn, wouldn't you say, about how this particular soul works.

LS: Yes. Yes, surely. But the question is—that is quite true, to that extent.

Same Student: Then could we perhaps agree that in some sense, then, being just to another would also be partaking in wisdom with another?

LS: In other words, that would mean we don't need justice as a special virtue?

Same Student: No, that there is the unity of virtue, that being just is also being wise.

LS: Yes, sure. But still, if the motivation is concern with wisdom, we could say wisdom alone supplies the motivation; the concern with wisdom, and you do not need justice as a special virtue. But on the other hand, if you look at this scene with Hippocrates, what did Socrates learn about Hippocrates there which he didn't know before, which he could not have figured out on the basis of what he knew of him before? Surely, there may be some quite peculiar possibility of which a man had no previous experience; then he will learn it, but there is a certain limited number of possibilities, of certain types.

Same Student: Wouldn't you say there's a difference between Socrates or anyone else having an idea about someone and an idea of what he might or probably would do, and the reality, the full, rich, concrete reality when that does happen, which is much more than any idea could be?

LS: Yes, that is a long question. To some extent that is surely true, but you must not [ascribe][ii] without previous proof, to Socrates a view which many people have today of the infinite wealth of every . . . I mean, connected with a certain notion of freedom.

Same Student: Well, the reason that I am bringing it up is that in my own view, I think that if Socrates is presenting in the *Protagoras* the fact that virtue is one and that any laws—for example, if we define piety as doing such and such and so and so, and give another definition to justice and another definition to courage, that there's a difference between following a law and being present to the one virtue, which Plato might call the good and in the Hebraic–Christian tradition might be called God, in which God is the sum in itself of all virtue.

LS: Yes, can you say that according—there are some theologians around here: Can you say that God has all the virtues, strictly speaking? Can you say God is courageous, God is temperate? Sounds like blasphemy. Yes? But even without revealed theology, read the end of Aristotle's *Ethics*, where he says something about these matters.[iii] But you can say perfect goodness; and the various virtues are not themselves perfect goodness but presuppose some fundamental defect. So temperance is not a virtue if we are not tempted to be intemperate. Now God is not tempted, by definition; therefore, this would be a question. But surely Plato does not believe that laws are the solution to the problem. He has written a very famous criticism of laws as such in the *Statesman*, but here there is no link-up with the question of laws or virtue. This is only the question of the distinction of the virtues.

Same Student: You don't think that it is a question of the unity of virtue?

LS: Well, sure it is, but the question of laws doesn't come in.

Same Student: Well, I think you pointed out that if there is in reality the good that a man has to step into and follow, then this particular man—Kierkegaard's pious Abraham, for

[ii] Strauss says "assume"; "ascribe" has been supplied by the editor.
[iii] Consider *Nicomachean Ethics*, 10.8 (1178b7–18).

instance, who is beyond the ethical—this particular man can break all rules because he is present to the good, and the good calls him and tells him to do what is good.

LS: But still, even granting that, could there not be kinds of goodness on the same level? Is not a courageous action different from a temperate action by virtue of the subject matter? This is not directly relevant, the unity of virtue. There could be a fundamental unity, say, the right intention, one could call it, but applied to different subject matter, and that would lead to a variety of virtues. . . .

Same Student: I myself would believe that, let's say in any situation—Abraham is called to sacrifice his son Isaac, Socrates is called to break the rules that he establishes—this requires all the virtues in this one call of the good which he has to step into. That a man who might be thought to be courageous—

LS: This might be true, but if you say "all the virtues," you imply there is a variety of virtues.

Same Student: No, but there is one virtue that can be looked at from many different angles.

LS: Yes, but what would that virtue be in the case of Socrates? Would it be obedience to god's will?

Same Student: It would be the good for Socrates.

LS: Well, I believe he would call it wisdom, or quest for wisdom.

Same Student: And not the *daimōn* that causes him to follow it?

LS: Well, then we would have to find out what the *daimōnion* is, and the belief that it is identical with the conscience is, to begin with, an assumption.

Same Student: Well, not with the conscience but with what the Hebrews and Christians call God.

LS: No, then he wouldn't call it *daimonion,* the little demon.

Same Student: Something that calls him to follow?

LS: Yes, but still it wouldn't be god. I mean, god is *theos* and not *daimonion,* something demonic, something lower—not in a bad sense, but something lower. Well, let us see; perhaps we find later on a passage which might be of help to you. Now where did we leave off?[iv]

Mr. Reinken: 349a4.

[iv] There is a brief inaudible exchange here.

LS: Yes.

Mr. Reinken:
How then can I do otherwise than invite you to the investigation of these subjects, and ask questions and consult with you? I must, indeed. And I should like once more to have my memory refreshed by you about the questions which I was asking you at first, and also to have your help in considering them. If I am not mistaken the question was this: Are wisdom and self-control and courage and justice and piety five names which denote the same thing? Or is there, corresponding to each of these names, a separate underlying reality—

LS: *Ousia*. Then if you want to use a traditional term, you should say "substance."

Mr. Reinken:
substance, a thing with its own peculiar power,[v] no one of them being like any other of them? And you replied—

LS: Now let us first stop here. Socrates repeats here the original question. [11]There is a general rule regarding such repetitions, just as there is a general rule regarding the central thing. By the way, the central thing here is again courage. . . . Now the general rule is that there is never an identical repetition and that the changes, however small, are as important as the thing repeated. Now when you look here at the original enumeration in 330b4 to 6, you will see the place occupied here by temperance or moderation is there by justice, and vice versa. The simple rule: justice and *sōphrosynē* or moderation are interchangeable: one can take the place of the other. A very impressive case of interchangeability is that in the *Banquet*, where Aristophanes is prevented from speaking because he has got a hiccup,[vi] and the physician Eryximachus speaks first so that Aristophanes has time to recover from his unpleasantness. Eryximachus and Aristophanes are interchanged: they are interchangeable. Of course, we do not yet know from what point of view. That we still need to find out, but it gives you an indication.

Now there is another change in the repetition, as you could also see by comparing the earlier passage, 330a3 to 6. He adds now each of these virtues has a peculiar *ousia*. *Ousia* became then, via the Latin, the word "substance." But it would be literally translated as being or beingness. Beingness. We can perhaps find out later on what this change, which is very profound though immediately unintelligible, means. Let us read on.

Mr. Reinken:
And you replied that the five names did not denote a single thing, but that each of them denoted a separate thing, and that all of these things were parts of virtue, not in the same way that the parts of gold are like each other and like the whole of which they are parts, but as the parts of the face are unlike the whole of which they are parts and one another—(349b-c)

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[v] In the translation: "pecular function."
[vi] *Symposium* 185c.

LS: Now you remember the difficulty which we pointed out, but which was not pointed out by Socrates: if the parts of virtue are like the parts of the face, the parts of virtue would not be virtues, as little as the eyes and the ears are faces. Now Socrates had omitted in the first statement, 329d to e, the question of whether the virtues might not be parts in the sense in which the species, the *eidē*, the ideas, are parts of the genus. For example, circle and rectangle are species of the genus geometrical figure or man and dog are species, parts, of the genus mammal. This possibility was not mentioned at all. Now perhaps he alludes to this possibility in the repetition here by speaking of *ousia*, of being or beingness, which is used by Plato frequently synonymously with *eidos*, idea. Good. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:
and have—

LS: To repeat: on the whole, Socrates simply repeats the state of the question as it was stated originally, prior to the litigation scene and prior to the Simonides scene. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and have each of them a distinct power.[vii] (349c)

LS: . . . Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:
I should like to know whether this is still your opinion; or if not, I will ask you to define your meaning, and I shall not take you to task if you now make a different statement. For I dare say that you may have said what you did only in order to make trial of me. (349c-d)

LS: Now is he not nice? He builds a golden bridge for Protagoras and he leaves him again a choice: Will you repeat your statement with which you didn't fare too well, or will you [LS chuckles] make the necessary adjustments? Socrates imputes to Protagoras what he does, namely, to make assertions only for the sake of testing others. That is Socratic irony. He treats Protagoras as that kind of Odysseus that he himself is. This testing was spoken of before in 341d when Socrates spoke of joking. Prodicus made a certain statement, and then Socrates says that Prodicus didn't mean it, he only joked. He only joked. But this joking and testing are the same thing, whether the other understands or does not understand that this statement is not meant literally and seriously. Now what does Protagoras do, confronted with this?

Mr. Reinken:
I answer, Socrates, he said, that all these qualities are parts of virtue, and that four out of the five are to some extent similar, and that the fifth of them, which is courage, is very different from the other four, as I prove in this way: You may observe that many men are

[vii] In the translation: "distinct function."

utterly unrighteous, impious, self-indulgent, ignorant, who are nevertheless remarkable for their courage. (349d)

LS: Now Protagoras tacitly retracts the comparison of the four virtues with the parts of the face. He almost admits that Socrates's abortive attempt to prove the identity of these four virtues has been successful. So he has learned something, but with qualifications. *The* virtue that shows the truth of Protagoras's original assertion is courage or manliness. Why does he say that? Well, we can say that things have gone wrong or badly for him with the four other virtues, and it is a sheer act of prudence to speak of the one which had not been previously discussed. This is all right as far as it goes, but it doesn't answer a primary question, namely, why did not Socrates bring up courage or manliness in the preceding discussion?

Now he had been leading up to the dualism of justice–piety on the one hand, and moderation–wisdom on the other. I repeat this time and again because it is crucial, I think. Now could one not say that courage or manliness is required by both, by justice–piety on the one hand, and by selfish prudence on the other, so that it would be in a class by itself? The peculiarity of courage, its unique position, is also indicated toward the end of the *Laws* 963 to 964b. But of course this does not prove that this is an absolute assertion of Plato, because the *Laws* are a very special book: they are anti-Spartan, and courage is *the* virtue of the Spartans, or was thought to be; therefore the necessity for debunking courage by denying any connection between it and wisdom was particularly great. So this will not help. Now why does this question of courage come up in this way, because these other explanations are not good enough? Well, in order to understand this dialogue and the last section in particular, we must never forget the fact that the dialogue takes place for the sake of Hippocrates. Now let us reconsider what happened from the angle of Hippocrates and imagine what has been going on in his soul. Now he is eager to become a pupil of Protagoras because he has political ambition. Protagoras is a teacher of the political art or political virtue. Socrates doubts whether this is teachable. He asserts that. And his simple proof: the Athenian democracy. Protagoras understood the warning, and he replies that the Athenian democracy regards virtue as teachable by everyone, and that everyone *has* been taught virtue effectively (remember that), with a few exceptions. But this virtue, which he calls political virtue, is not any excellence or eminence: it consists of justice, piety, moderation in a very simple and low sense. Courage and wisdom are not a part of it. The instruction in virtue which is peculiar to Protagoras, as distinguished from every Athenian, becomes almost invisible. I hope you remember that.

Now then Socrates raises the question, after Protagoras has finished his long speech, of the relation of virtue and its parts. He tries to prove that piety and justice are identical with or inseparable from wisdom. Now what does this mean? Either every Athenian is wise—and Socrates as a matter of fact says so in a passage which we did not sufficiently appreciate, in 319b3 to 4—or most Athenians, by being not-wise, are not even pious and just. That is an alternative. But Protagoras cannot dare to question the wisdom of the Athenians, so he must leave it at the wisdom of the Athenians, and that means no Athenian needs Protagoras's art because they are well supplied. Now in the debate, Protagoras is defeated by Socrates. This much Hippocrates must have seen. He is

debunked by him, and still more so in the litigation scene. Protagoras then turns to his special forte, the interpretation and criticism of poems. But precisely on that ground he is again defeated by Socrates; he is compelled to return to Socrates's subject. Now you see Hippocrates is no longer likely to be eager to pay pots and pots of money to Protagoras for his instruction.

Now at this point, Protagoras insists on the radical difference between courage, manliness, and the other virtues. Courage surely is not wisdom or knowledge; that seems to be obvious to him, and I suppose to us too. But courage is surely an indispensable ingredient of political virtue in the ordinary commonsensical sense of the term. Now if this is so, it follows indeed [that] if courage is not wisdom and it is essential for political excellence, then political virtue is not teachable, because only if it were knowledge of some sort could it be taught, *except* to those who are already courageous. Protagoras can't make them courageous, but if they are courageous he can build on their courage, on this native courage, so to speak: wisdom. Hippocrates doesn't have to come to Protagoras in order to learn courage, but wisdom. Now what about this condition? Does Hippocrates fulfill the condition of being courageous before he comes to Protagoras?

Student: He went after that slave.

LS: Yes, in 310d3, Socrates says explicitly that he was impressed by his courage. So this is a special situation. Therefore the only virtue which Hippocrates already possesses is courage, and there is no question of his possessing wisdom or moderation or justice. And therefore he is, so to speak, a natural candidate for instruction by Protagoras. This is the connection. Now of course the great question arises. If courage should prove to be wisdom, then two consequences follow: either that Hippocrates does not need Protagoras—if he has courage, he has already wisdom—or else that Hippocrates is not even courageous, whatever that may be, the quality which Socrates provisionally called courage in this case. This will be decided in the sequel. . . Mr. Dry?[viii]

Mr. Dry: Is Hippocrates really courageous?

LS: Prior to real proof, we have to believe Socrates. We don't know Hippocrates, but Socrates knew him; and Socrates said he is politically ambitious, and Socrates said he is courageous. Whether these things, especially the assertion regarding Hippocrates's courage, will not break down after a more profound study of what courage is, that's another matter. But in the superficial sense he is courageous.

Mr. Dry: But if he is courageous, he is in the sense that he is like the other people of this group courageous enough to come to Protagoras for further enlightenment.

LS: Yes. But of course here the question is disregarded, since there are various levels. Whether you do not also need some intelligence in addition to courage in order to learn something, this question is wholly abstracted from in this dialogue. There is an allusion to it when Socrates speaks about his nature, when he speaks to Protagoras about

[viii] The tape was changed at this point.

Hippocrates's nature. He had discussed it at that time, and he only said what people think about his nature, not what his nature truly is.

Mr. Dry: It seems that if he said that if courage is wisdom, then either Hippocrates doesn't need Protagoras's teaching or else—

LS: He is not courageous.

Mr. Dry: Or he is not courageous. Now suppose he had this rough kind of courage that the people come to Protagoras with to be further enlightened. He would be courageous in a sense, because coming to Protagoras—

LS: Yes, but if this proves to be not courage, then it is no good.

Mr. Dry: You mean what Protagoras is teaching.

LS: No, no, his quality; if his quality only looks like courage but isn't courage, it is no good.

Mr. Dry: . . . unenlightened . . . potentiality for courage—

LS: But that we don't know, it may have prevented him, for all we know, prior to . . . Yes?

Student: Then Protagoras's art is no longer the political art. It has something to do with his enlightenment which might well be reduced to rhetoric.

LS: Yes. Well, rhetoric is eminently political.

Same Student: But it is not the political art.

LS: Well, the first part of your statement is very good and very important. In the whole process of the *Protagoras*, Socrates not only debunks Protagoras and shows that he is not as clever and admirable as people think but, which is in a way equally important, he debunks this notion of the political art. The art which will come out in the sequel—because Socrates will make a counterproposal in the sequel to Protagoras of what the sophists should do—this art is no longer the political art. So that is a twofold debunking, and the beginning of that is Protagoras's statement regarding courage here, from which we must read, but it takes some time. Now let us continue, how Socrates establishes this. Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken:
Stop, I said; I should like to investigate that. When you speak of courageous men, do you mean the confident, or something else?
Yes, he said; I mean the aggressive, ready to go at that which most people are afraid to approach.

In the next place, you would affirm virtue to be a good thing, of which good thing you assert yourself to be a teacher. (349e)

LS: Oh no, no, no, no: "noble, noble."

Mr. Reinken:
a noble thing.

LS: He speaks always of noble in this connection here. I mean, what we call the moral was called by the Greeks the noble and just. You know? The good is not in itself a moral criterion; the good is the useful, also. What we call the moral is the just and the noble: the just is what is our duty, as we think; the noble is beyond the call of duty, I mean what is particularly praiseworthy. The noble, in Latin *honesta*, which of course has undergone all kinds of meanings, the honest, but has a much broader meaning in original Latin. Yes? He says: Most noble unless I am mad. Now we had a reference to the question of madness in 323a to b: a certain statement, true statement would never be made by people who are not mad. So this does not mean [that] it would be mad to make the statement, but it is not necessarily untrue according to Protagoras's own interpretation of what madness is. But go on.

Mr. Reinken:
And is it partly noble and partly base, I said, or wholly noble?
Wholly noble, and in the highest degree.
Tell me, then, who are they who have confidence when diving into a well?
I should say, the divers.
And the reason of this is that they have knowledge*?*
Yes, that is the reason.
And who have confidence when fighting on horseback—the skilled horsemen or the unskilled?
The skilled.
And who when fighting with light shields—the peltasts or the non-peltasts?
The peltasts. And that is true of all other cases, he said, if that is your point. Those who have knowledge are more confident than those who have no knowledge, and they are more confident after they have learned than before.
And have you not seen persons utterly ignorant, I said, of these things, and yet confident about them?
Yes, he said, I have seen such persons far too confident.
And are not these confident persons also courageous?
In that case, he replied, courage would be a base thing, for the men of whom we are speaking are surely madmen.
Then what do you mean when you speak of the courageous? Do you not mean that they are confident?
Yes, he said; to that statement I adhere.
And those, I said, who are thus confident without knowledge are really not courageous, but mad. And in the former case, on the other hand, those who are the wisest are also the

most confident, and being the most confident are most courageous. According to this argument also wisdom would be courage.[ix] (349e-350c)

LS: Now what is the nerve of the argument? There are two kinds of confidence, a noble and a base. The noble we call courage, and the base we call madness. Noble confidence, this kind of confidence—noble confidence is courage. But what is the difference between noble confidence and ignoble? Answer: that it is based on knowledge. Hence courage, noble confidence, is knowledge or wisdom. That's Socratic irony. Now let us not consider now what Protagoras says later. Protagoras will give a critical analysis of this argument. But what would be our reaction to this argument?

Mr. Reinken: I think it depends on what the knowledge is of. You might say that in the case of the diver, merely to know that you can get away with it is not what we call courage, but to know that you must do a thing even though there is a very little chance of your coming through [it], that is an ingredient in true military courage.

LS: Yes, well, now let us try to be a bit more precise. Now those who face something of which they know that it is not dangerous, are they courageous? If someone is not afraid of a harmless fly? Surely not. By courage we understand something like standing up to dangerous things, for example, to the tyrant and all his might. Yes, that would be a courageous man. Now is it of the essence of the wise man to do this, to stand up to the tyrant and all his might? According to Simonides in 346b: No, the wise man may adjust himself. Only the wise man who opposes the tyrant's injustice needs courage. So the relation of wisdom and courage is ambiguous, and this surely implies that wisdom is not identical with courage. The argument, in other words, has somehow a defect. Aristotle develops this at great length in the third book of the *Ethics* when he speaks of courage and shows that this professional courage is not true courage, because when you trust your competence, you do not face a danger as such. That is the point. Yes?

Student: Would you say that Socrates in every one of his actions which is concerned with wisdom is also displaying courage? Because in always going deeper into getting involved with people for wisdom, there is always the unknown: he doesn't know what is going to happen to him because he is getting involved with them.

LS: Yes. Well, I suppose so. But the question is: Can any man be simply courageous? At the end of the *Phaedo,* the praise of Socrates—does anyone one of you have the *Phaedo* here, because I don't remember it by heart. Well, Socrates was said to be the best, the wisest, and so on of his contemporaries, not simply.[x] Because if all virtue is wisdom, and men cannot be wise but only seekers for wisdom, "philosophers," then of course no men can be simply virtuous. And therefore I hesitate to answer your question. In the ordinary sense, he surely was a very courageous man.

Same Student: Well, since everyman has to be a seeker for wisdom—

[ix] What is here translated as "power" or "powerful" is in the text of the translation "able" or "ability."

[x] *Phaedo* 118a.

Mr. Reinken: For both men . . .

LS: I see, yes, he was the wisest, and justest, and best. Well, courage is not even mentioned in it. In the lists of Socrates's virtues, the two lists which Xenophon makes,[xi] courage is not mentioned. That is a long question, because courage is an ambiguous virtue. Yes?

Student: If every man has to be a seeker for wisdom and can never be wise or be good, doesn't this always involve going beyond yourself and looking for something more, and isn't this what courage is?

LS: All right, then you understand courage in an unusual way, but you surely made one mistake. Plato doesn't say, or Socrates [doesn't say], that *every* man must seek for wisdom. Some can't. Some can't; and if they would try, it would really be a very sorry spectacle. Yes?

Same Student: I think in the *Phaedo* Socrates says that his life, or all life is a preparation for dying.

LS: Yes. But who are the ones who prepare themselves for death, according to Socrates?

Same Student: Only the wise.

LS: Philosophers. You see, we are back where we started. Now this gentleman from the New School in the last row—I forgot your name.

Student: Is the implication here that fear is predicated upon ignorance, and as you get knowledge then fear tends to dissipate itself?

LS: Yes.

Student: And with the lack of fear, which comes through knowledge, you also have confidence, and with confidence you have courage. There is a definite relationship here.

LS: But this question is: Is this what we mean by courage, the kind of confidence coming from knowledge? That is from a kind of professional knowledge. Then you have to put it on a broader basis and say [that] courage comes from the awareness that death is no evil, from the insight that death is no evil. And that is a long story. Now that is not the kind of knowledge which the horseman or the divers as such have. They may have it, but they do not have it as such. But then I suggest that we turn to Protagoras's criticism of Socrates's argument which comes in the sequel. It would be good if we could finish that.

Mr. Reinken:
Nay, Socrates, he replied, you are mistaken in your remembrance of what I said and answered to you. When you asked me, I certainly did say that the courageous are the

[xi] Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 4.8.11 and *Apology of Socrates to the Jury*, 14.

confident; but I was never asked whether the confident are the courageous. If you had asked me, I should have answered, "Not all of them": and what I did answer, namely, that the courageous are confident, you have not proved to be false. (350c-d)

LS: Let us first see. Here you see first Protagoras is now quite sure of himself. He is no longer nervous, and this may be due to Socrates's treatment—you know, when Socrates said to him: You may have made your earlier statements not because you believe them, but in order to test me. Now his diagnosis of the defects of Socrates's reasoning: first, Socrates had inferred from "the courageous are confident" that "the confident are courageous." Did Socrates do that? I don't believe so. Certain phrases could have misled Protagoras into thinking that, but Socrates made it perfectly clear: confidence is the genus of which courage and madness, let's say, are species. Socrates did not make this mistake. But he gives now another diagnosis in the sequel. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Next you proceeded to show that those who have knowledge are more confident than they were before they had knowledge, and more confident than others who have no knowledge, and were then led on to think that courage is the same as wisdom. But in this way of arguing you might come to imagine that strength is wisdom. You might begin by asking whether the strong are able, and I should say "Yes"; and then whether those who know how to— (350d)

LS: Let us rather say "powerful," that "the strong are powerful."

Mr. Reinken:
the strong are powerful, and I should say "Yes"; and then whether those who know how to wrestle are not more able to wrestle than those who do not know how to wrestle, and more powerful after than before they had learned, and I should assent. And when I had admitted this, you might use my admissions in such a way as to prove that upon my view wisdom is strength; whereas in that case I should not have admitted, any more than in the other, that the powerful are strong, although I have admitted that the strong are powerful. For there is a difference between power and strength.[xii] (350d-e)

LS: Yes, now let us stop here for a moment. Now this analysis runs like this: Socrates had inferred from the fact that the knowers are more courageous than the non-knowers that courage is knowledge. Socrates had done this. But why is the inference wrong? According to Protagoras, Socrates's inference is like this: the strong are powerful; the knowers are powerful; hence strength is identical with knowledge. But by admitting that the strong are powerful, one does not admit that all powerful are strong. Or to take a simple example of this fallacy, which Protagoras attributes to Socrates: all bees are animals; all seagulls are animals; *ergo* all bees are seagulls. But Socrates, whatever he did, did not commit this kind of blunder. So Protagoras has not really seen what the problem here is. Socrates did not make this simple blunder, that is clear, whatever was wrong. Now let us see how Protagoras goes on from here.

[xii] What is here translated as "power" or "powerful" is in the text of the translation "able" or "ability."

Mr. Reinken:
the former [that is power][xiii] is given by knowledge as well as by madness or rage—

LS: Now one moment, let me figure that one out. Power and strength are not the same. [12]Power comes both from knowledge and from madness as well as spiritedness. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
but strength comes from nature and a healthy state of the body. (351a)

LS: No, "good food," from good feeding of the body. Yes? So power comes from knowledge and from madness as well as spiritedness. Strength comes from nature and good feeding of the body. In other words, so far from being identical, power and strength have absolutely nothing in common. He goes to the other extreme in order to prevent Socrates's false extreme, namely, the simple identification. And now the application crucial to our case.

Mr. Reinken:
And in like manner I say of confidence and courage that they are not the same; and I argue that the courageous are confident, but not all the confident courageous. For confidence may be given to men by art, and also—

LS: Art in the same sense as science here, or knowledge. But he uses the word *technē*, indeed. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
like power, by madness and rage, but courage comes to them from nature and good nurture of the soul. (351a)

LS: Of the soul. Yes. Now the statement is clear. If we take it very literally, it means that courage is not a kind of confidence, just as strength is not a kind of power. [13]In other words, Protagoras would run from the frying pan into the fire in order to prevent the identification of wisdom and courage or of confidence and courage. He denies that they have anything in common. But more important is the following: courage comes from nature and good feeding of the soul. But what is the food for the soul?

Student: Teaching.

LS: Teaching, 313c, where Socrates explains this to Hippocrates. Hence courage comes from knowledge of properly gifted people, from the education of properly gifted people. But what about wisdom? Does wisdom not come from exactly the same thing? Hence Protagoras proves unwittingly what he hates to prove, namely, that courage is wisdom. But perhaps Protagoras makes a distinction between good feeding of the soul and learning or teaching, for all we know. Then of course courage would not be the same as wisdom. Wisdom would have nothing to do with good feeding of the soul, i.e., with the

[xiii] The words in square brackets are Mr. Reinken's interpolation.

education which he, Protagoras, conveys. That could be, that this is not wisdom at all, [that] what he teaches these young ambitious Athenians is not wisdom. But does he even teach courage? We have observed his silence on courage in his long speech, where he mentioned only justice, piety, and moderation. These three virtues, which he called at that time political virtue, do not come from nature because everyone has them, but they come in a manner from good feeding of the soul. Wisdom comes from nature but not from good feeding of the soul. And then if this is so, courage would occupy a position in between political virtue in Protagoras's sense and wisdom. Yet this of course is untenable, because political virtue must include—whether Protagoras has admitted it or not—must include courage because the political art necessarily includes the art of war, as Protagoras states in his long speech, 326.[xiv]

One thing is clear: the final statement here at the end of this speech and the statement in 349d6 to 8, they contradict each other. Protagoras seems to be quite confused regarding this virtue of manliness or courage. And we have to return to that next time. Let us only read the very beginning of the next statement.

Mr. Reinken:
I said: You would admit, Protagoras, that some men live well and others ill?

LS: Yes, now let us stop here. Now Protagoras has in his view defeated Socrates's attempt to prove that wisdom is identical with courage, and he has made quite a long speech, as you have seen. But Socrates acts very differently than he did on that former occasion when Protagoras made his long speech in 334 [to] 335. Why does he act differently now? On the former occasion, in 334c6 to 7, after he had made the long speech—you remember, something different is good for the roots of a tree and for the leaves and all this kind of thing—when he had said this, those present shouted aloud how well he spoke, and then Socrates begins with the litigation. Now here we see no shouting "wonderful speech," no praise of Protagoras. How come? Why do the others not acclaim Protagoras anymore? So a simple explanation would be that they have learned a lesson. Last time they acclaimed, Socrates threatened to finish the whole thing. In other words, the others, not only Protagoras, are now in awe of Socrates. Not only Protagoras but the audience too is chastened.

Yes. Now we must leave it at this point, and we will continue here. I am sorry I cannot stay here for questions.

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[1] Deleted "however"
[2] Deleted "now"
[3] Deleted "does"
[4] Deleted "to be"
[5] Deleted "Now let me see."
[6] Deleted "which I read"
[7] Deleted "Again, Socrates is concerned—"

[xiv] At 326c Protagoras notes that students are sent to physical trainers so that they need not be compelled to be cowards in war; the reference to the art of war as part of the political art is at 322b.

[8] Deleted “Same Student: What? LS: Where does it say that Protagoras converses with Socrates . . . .”
[9] Deleted “Do we not—"
[10] Deleted “to be”
[11] Deleted “Now”
[12] Deleted “the one comes, namely”
[13] Deleted “and then”

Session 14: May 12, 1965

On the Hedonism of the Many (352e–356c)

Leo Strauss: It seems to me that all the difficulties of this dialogue are concentrated in the last section, which we are discussing now. I will state to you the difficulties in the form of questions. Perhaps we can solve them; I am by no means certain that I can. Now there are three things: the emphasis on courage or manliness, this is *the* theme: Is wisdom identical with courage or not? Why that emphasis on manliness? Second, Socrates tries to prove the identity of manliness and wisdom on the basis of the premise that the good is identical with the pleasant. Why is that? And third, this premise is not accepted by Protagoras, nor is it accepted by the many, and yet Socrates establishes this in a dialogue within the dialogue between Socrates and the many. Why does he bring in the many? These are the three glaring questions, and we can only hope that we get some answers to them, but I don't promise it.

Now I will only give a brief repetition, slightly enlarging what I said last time. Now courage is the only virtue according to Protagoras which is surely not wisdom or knowledge, and that means that the only virtue which Protagoras or anybody else cannot teach, because you can only teach knowledge. At the same time, it is the only virtue ascribed by Socrates to Hippocrates. Now if Protagoras teaches something different from what every Athenian teaches, the political art which he teaches cannot be what he calls political virtue, i.e., justice, piety, and moderation to the exclusion of wisdom and courage. The political art requires—in a broader sense, in the sense in which he means it originally, and not after having been warned by Socrates and therefore made to switch his statement—the political art in which Hippocrates is interested requires on the part of the pupil who wishes to go into politics a particular drive, or "energy," as we would say today, which only few men possess, and that is what is loosely meant by courage. This whole notion of the political art which Protagoras did not develop owing to Socrates's warning—"Don't forget that you are in Athens"—stands and falls by the fact that wisdom differs from courage. If, however, wisdom and courage were identical, it would follow either that Hippocrates, being courageous, is already wise and therefore doesn't need Protagoras, or else that [1][Hippocrates] is not courageous and the kind of drive which he possesses is not courage. And hence he would not have any special natural fitness for becoming the pupil of Protagoras but only his wealth, which is of course an important consideration for Protagoras.

Now Socrates has tried to prove that courage and wisdom are the same, and he has clearly failed, although not for the reason given by Protagoras. Furthermore, in stating his view of courage, Protagoras in fact brings courage very close to wisdom—I do not know whether that has become quite clear last time—in 351b beginning, when he says [that] courage comes from nature and good feeding of the soul. And if you turn to the first statement of Protagoras on this subject, in 349d6 to 8, you will find many men [who are] most unjust, and impious, and licentious, and unteachable, and yet outstandingly

courageous. In other words, courage contains nothing of an intellectual element and here, at least, good feeding of the soul could remind us of the intellect.

Now why does the whole dialogue turn around Hippocrates? We must never forget that is one of the few glimmers of light we have in our misery. Hippocrates is, however, not the only motif of this dialogue. Equally important and not unconnected with the Hippocrates motif is Protagoras's peculiarity, what distinguishes him from all other men, and that is his candor. That is of course very important for young Hippocrates, because he will know exactly where he stands if that claim of Protagoras is justified. Now the question of candor is not explicitly discussed, but only implicitly. And it comes to the fore in the Simonides section, where we have seen a confrontation of the two ancestries—Socrates's and Protagoras's—and both were not characterized by candor, whereas Protagoras is the candid man.

Now Socrates takes the side of the concealers: [either] the Laconizers or the makers of long speeches like Simonides. There are two kinds of concealment: one stemming from justice, and one stemming from fear. Simonides, highly praised by Socrates, practiced the latter, which means Simonides was wise but not courageous. So the whole issue of concealment implies the question of the relation of wisdom and courage. Protagoras says there is no need for concealment, i.e., there is a harmony between wisdom and the city, and therefore no need for courage of the wise man. The question of courage doesn't arise. But if there should be a disharmony between wisdom and the city, the wise man must either stand up and be courageous, or adjust himself. . . . The question of courage necessarily arises for the man who believes in concealment.

I mention in this connection a point which I didn't bring out on the earlier occasion, on the proper occasion. Now if there is a harmony between philosophy or wisdom and the city, i.e., the two good things, then prepolitical life is *the* bad thing, or to use a simple term, civilization is simply good. There is no problem of civilization. But if there is a disharmony between wisdom and the city, there is a problem of civilization. Prepolitical life is not *the* bad thing: there are vices of civilization which are as bad as the defects of prephilosophic life. Now Protagoras, who says there is no need for concealment, [that] there is a harmony between philosophy and the city, also says there is no problem of civilization: prepolitical life is absolutely terrible, and compared with it everything now is just wonderful. You remember that statement in 327d. The Platonic view is stated, one can say, in the *Laws*, 678a: civilization is the simultaneous development of virtues and vices. In passing I remark that there is a certain similarity between Protagoras and modern enlightenment, as represented by Hobbes especially on the one hand, and Socrates and Rousseau's critique of the enlightenment on the other. This, I believe, is generally known, although probably not universally known. But we must not forget that there are also very important differences. In other words, if you make it a proportion [LS writes on the blackboard]: Protagoras is to Socrates as Hobbes is to Rousseau. Good. But the proportion is not identical: there is something which Protagoras and Socrates share by the mere fact that they are not modern, and which Hobbes and Rousseau share by the mere fact that they are modern. This latter question is somewhat more subtle and more difficult to answer, but of course that is not a reason for disavowing it.

I think we should now continue from where we left off. That was in 351b3. So the situation is this: Socrates has tried to prove, without success, that wisdom is identical with courage. He has failed. He turns now apparently to an entirely different subject. We will read this, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:
[Soc.:] I said: You would admit, Protagoras, that some men live well and others ill?
He assented.
And do you think that a man lives well who lives in pain and grief?
He does not.
But if he lives pleasantly—

LS: No, that is always indirect speech, yes? He denied it, he denied it. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
But if he lives pleasantly to the end of his life, will he not in that case—

LS: No, literally, "if he would end his life pleasantly"—"if living pleasantly, he would end his life." Yes? (351b)

Mr. Reinken:
he would end his life. Will he not in this case have lived well?
He assented.[i]

LS: No, no. Now he says, "I agree," you see, because Socrates forces him now to answer in his own name and not merely to say what the others say. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Then to live pleasantly is good, and to live unpleasantly base?[ii]
Yes, he said.

LS: Now let us stop here for one moment. Socrates proposes that the good is identical with the pleasant. This is very strange because in the sister dialogue, in the *Gorgias*, Socrates asserts exactly the opposite: that the good is radically different from the pleasant. This he does especially in the Callicles section, where this is *the* theme. Now why does he here proceed in the opposite manner? Well, it is not clear; we must wait and see. Or do you have an answer, Mr. Dry?

Mr. Dry: Well, your suggestion from the last discussion: the Simonides section made a distinction on the basis of some virtues being both good and pleasant and others being simply good, some through self-compulsion and others through compulsion, suggesting that if this distinction breaks down, then the Simonides section provides the link to the

[i] In the translation: "He will."
[ii] In the translation: "evil."

unity of the virtues. Socrates is now going to break down the distinction by equating the . . .

LS: Yes, well, whether that is sufficient I doubt very much. But we get an inkling of that here: to live well means to live pleasantly, and now in the passage, in the literal translation: if living pleasantly, he would end his life. In other words, ending the life is popularly called dying. What about dying pleasantly? Furthermore, death casts its shadow on our whole life: Can one live pleasantly if one fears death, and can one help fearing death unless one knows that death is not an evil, or at least not the greatest evil? But this knowledge is the core of a genuine courage. This shows also why the wise men, that is to say the men who are adept at living well or pleasantly, must be courageous, because otherwise the greatest pain, the greatest fear, would spoil all pleasures. But if the wise are courageous, why do they give in to tyrants as Simonides did, and thus show lack of courage? Now surely the case of Socrates is not identical to that of Simonides, but Socrates answers the question in the *Apology of Socrates* 31d, "Why did you not go into politics?"—a fictitious question addressed to him by the audience: Well, I would have been killed. Now of course, does that mean that Socrates was afraid of death, or did he think he was still useful? While he felt he was no longer useful, when he was seventy. That is the question which we must not . . . So let us go on here. Now Protagoras is already speaking for himself. And Socrates had said [that] to live pleasantly is good and to live unpleasantly is bad. What does Protagoras say?

Mr. Reinken:
Yes, he said, if he lives so as to find pleasure in what is good and noble.

LS: No, "In the noble things." "If he lives deriving pleasure from the noble things only." So in other words, Protagoras opposes the simple equation of the good with the pleasant: only certain kinds, only the noble pleasant things are good. Yes? So that is important. Protagoras does not accept the premise of the whole argument that the good is unqualifiedly identical to the pleasant. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And do you, Protagoras, like the rest of the world—

LS: "Like the many."

Mr. Reinken:
like the many, call some pleasant things evil and some painful things good? For I say that things are good in so far as they are pleasant if they have no consequences of another sort, and in so far as they are painful they are bad.

I do not know, Socrates, he said, whether I can venture to assert[2] in that unqualified manner in which you ask, that all pleasant things are good and the painful evil. Having regard not only to my present answer, but also to the whole of my life, I shall be safer, if I am not mistaken, in saying that there are some pleasant things which are not good, and

that there are some painful things which are not evil, and some which are, and that there are some which are neither good nor evil.

LS: Yes. Now you see Socrates first appealed as it were to the snobbism of Protagoras: You don't agree with the view of the many, do you? But this doesn't make any impression on Protagoras. Protagoras has been chastened, as you see: he has learned to be well advised and not only think of the present situation, what might get him out of a fix, because it might bring him into a fix on another occasion. But he has learned this in his old age. His answer must be good not only for the moment but in harmony with his whole life, meaning with the justification of his whole life in all circumstances. Or one can also state this as follows. One must think not only of impressing one's competitors and thus possibly repel potential students, or vice versa; he has to take these two things into consideration at the same time, and some more. Honesty is the best policy, it seems, and not a fictitious candor. Now how deep that goes we will see in the sequel. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And you would call pleasant, I said, the things which participate in pleasure or create pleasure.
Certainly, he said.
Then my meaning is that in so far as they are pleasant they are good; and my question would imply that pleasure in itself is good.
According to your favorite mode of speech, Socrates, "let us investigate this," he said; and if the investigation is to the point, and the result proves that pleasure and good are really the same, then we will agree; but, if not, then we will argue. (351e)

LS: You see, Protagoras has become an imitator of Socrates. The roles are completely changed. We have observed in an earlier passage where it appeared that he had become the Odysseus, whereas originally Socrates was the Odysseus. Socrates does not reply to this remark, because naturally he doesn't wish to rub it in. But this is now the situation. Yes. Socrates replies in a somewhat different way.

Mr. Reinken:
And would you wish to begin the enquiry, I said, or shall I begin?
You ought to take the lead, he said—

LS: Literally translated, "you are just in taking the lead," with this ambiguity of the Greek expression: it could mean it is your right or your duty. It is indistinguishable. "You are just." Why? "Because you are in charge of the conversation." Yes? Socrates gives Protagoras another choice, as we have seen, and this time he chooses wisely, namely, to follow Socrates; because if Socrates is the leader, Protagoras is naturally the follower. This is not yet brought out here, but [it is] brought out when this subject is repeated. Protagoras now deserves to rule because he is a sensible man, but he is too just to desire it. He has made great progress. Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

May I employ an illustration? I said. Suppose someone who is enquiring into the health or some other bodily function of another on the basis of that person's general appearance —he looks at his face and at the tips of his fingers—

LS: Well, not his fingers, but the word is used in a wider sense: the visible part of the arm, not of the fingers only. In other words, he would look at the most visible part of the body, the hands; if we are dressed, the hands and the face. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and then he says: Uncover your chest and back to me that I may have a better view. That is the sort of thing that I desire in this investigation. Having seen what your attitude is toward good and pleasure, I am minded to say to you: Uncover your mind to me, Protagoras, and reveal your attitude toward knowledge, that I may know whether or not— (351a-b)

LS: Now let us stop here. Let us stop here. Now Socrates, you see, is now the acknowledged leader, and he makes full use of his leadership or rule. He is going to examine not the good as the pleasant, but Protagoras, and he treats Protagoras as a physician treats a patient. Protagoras had doubted whether the good is identical with the pleasant, and Socrates says: I understand where you stand regarding that, this issue, and I suppose this means you do not wish to concede that the good is identical with the pleasant. Perhaps you believe that the good is something different from the pleasant. We do not know. That is entirely open. Yes. Now how do we go on?

Mr. Reinken:
the usual attitude toward knowledge, that I may know whether or not you agree with the many. Now the many are of opinion that knowledge is not a powerful, lordly, commanding thing: they do not think that it does actually mean[iii] anything of that sort at all, but their notion is that a man may have knowledge, and yet that the knowledge which is in him may be overmastered by anger, or pleasure, or pain, or love, or perhaps by fear—[iv] (352b)

LS: No, "frequently by fear." The only thing of which it is said it is frequent.

Mr. Reinken:
frequently by fear—just as if knowledge were nothing but a slave and might be dragged about by all these other things. Now is that your view? Or do you think that knowledge is a noble thing and fit to command in man, which cannot be overcome and will not allow a man, if he only knows the good and the evil, to do anything which is contrary to what his knowledge bids him do, but that wisdom will have strength to help him?
I agree with you, Socrates, said Protagoras; and not only so, but I, above all other men, am bound to say that wisdom and knowledge are the mightiest of human things. (352b-c)

[iii] In the translation: "do not think of it as being."
[iv] What is translated as "the many" in this passage is in the text of the translation "the rest of the world."

LS: "Of the human things," yes. Now that is of some importance. The many think that knowledge can be overcome by certain things, for example, by pleasure. Now this thought of the many was shared in a way by Simonides, 345c, and there [it was] apparently approved by Socrates. It is rejected by Protagoras. Now when he seems to qualify it, at the end of the passage we now read, by the notion of the strongest of the human things, what does he mean by that? After all, there are other things which are not human. Yes?

Student: Natural disasters.

LS: For instance, yes. But broader—that is true, it points in the right direction. Yes?

Student: The gods.

LS: No, that is not necessary. By leaving open the distinction to what extent these natural disasters are god-sent, acts of god? Yes?

Student: Chance, fate.

LS: Yes, that would also belong to that, but there is a somewhat broader connection. Protagoras has given an account of the whole in his myth, and there it appeared that knowledge and mind were not ruling, but they came in afterward. Do you remember that? So knowledge doesn't rule things in general, very far from it, but it rules or it can rule the human things. The wise man is a man in whom the mind inside rules everything else, but not in the universe. This is, I think, the meaning of that qualification.

Yes, naturally there is a difference between a disaster, a mishap, and the passions of which he speaks here. But one could perhaps say that the mishaps translate themselves into passions by fear, grief, and so on. Now clearly Protagoras says: I cannot possibly say that because I am the sophist, the man of the enlightenment. He is bound to believe in the quasi-omnipotence of knowledge, at least in human affairs, whereas those who are not men of the enlightenment, like Simonides and Socrates, are under no such compulsion. This seems to be clear.

There are five passions mentioned here. The enumeration is not quite clear, but there are five,[v] just as there were five virtues in 349b. I do not believe that there is any correspondence between these two enumerations. Let us see whether we can find some order. Pleasure and pain have to do with the present. Spiritedness, [or] confidence,[vi] and fear have to do with future evil; and *eros*, in the sense of desire altogether, with future good. This seems to be the underlying division. The five fundamental passions, we can say. Yes. So we have now together almost all the premises of the following discussion, but we still need a few more lines. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

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[v] The five are: spiritedness (*thumos*); pleasure (*hēdonē*); pain (*lupē*); love (*eros*); fear (*phobos*).
[vi] Strauss refers to *thumos* as both "spiritedness" and "confidence."

Good, I said, and true. But are you aware that the many[vii] do not—

LS: "The many of the human beings."

Mr. Reinken:
many of the human beings do not share your conviction and mine, but claim that many people know the things which are best, but do not do them when they might? And most persons whom I have asked the reason of this have said that when men act contrary to knowledge they are overcome by pain, or pleasure, or some of those things which I was just now mentioning. (352d-e)

LS: Now Socrates and Protagoras agree, at least apparently, as to the supremacy of knowledge, and the many deny it. And the many prove their point by their knowledge of the many, the judgment of the many about the many. Many, knowing the better and able to do it, do the worse, choose the worse because they are overcome by pleasure. Well, the point of the many is familiar to every one of us: someone should not smoke cigarettes and is overcome by the desire for a cigarette. A daily experience. And there are also harsher examples which you know, I trust, only from the literature. [Laughter] Good. So in other words, that well-known phenomenon of being overcome by passion [3]is unintelligible if Socrates and Protagoras are right in saying *the* ruling thing in the mind is knowledge. Now what does Protagoras say?

Mr. Reinken:
Yes, Socrates, he replied; and that is not the only point about which mankind is in error. (352e)

LS: Yes, "the human beings." I must insist on that translation. Protagoras dismisses the view of the many as the view of the many: Who cares for what these fools think? You see, he cared very much when Socrates spoke not of the many but of the Athenians, because he was in Athens and he had to be careful. But the many in general: you can say the worst thing about them and nothing happens to you. The many is now replaced—from now on, up to 358 beginning, for a very long stretch—by the human beings. And that is a very strange thing, which we must try, if we are able, to understand. Well, of course we will not take this snobbish posture of Protagoras and say that at first glance, the many have got a point. And secondly, Protagoras, being a teacher of the many, must be willing to condescend to these poor fish after all. So that we do not know. Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
[Soc.:] Suppose, then, that you and I endeavor to persuade and explain to them what is the nature of this—

LS: Yes, "the human beings," always this word. I am sorry if I have to be pedantic, but otherwise you miss something.

Mr. Reinken:

[vii] In the translation: "the majority of the world."

to the humans, what is the nature of this event which they call "being overcome by pleasure," and which they affirm to be the reason why they do not always do what they realize to be best. When we say to them: Friends—

LS: No, no, "human beings."

Mr. Reinken: Ah, "humans."

LS: Now you see the key point is that these are human beings in general; they are not *andres*, not *hombres*. That is the point. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
you are mistaken, and are saying what is not true, they would probably reply: Protagoras and Socrates, if this event is not to be called "being overcome by pleasure," pray tell us what it is, and what you would call it.
But why, Socrates, need we investigate the opinion of the humans—

LS: "Of the many human beings."

Mr. Reinken:
of the many humans, who just say anything that comes to their head? (353a-b)

LS: If the many wrongly assert that knowledge can be overcome by pleasure, one must give another account of the phenomenon to which they refer. Now suppose a man is not supposed to drink water and he can't restrain himself. These things happen. Socrates and Protagoras are in the same boat regarding supremacy of knowledge, but they differ regarding the relation of the good and the pleasant. The many deny the supremacy of knowledge. Where do they stand regarding the issue of pleasure and the good? Well, I think they implicitly deny that the good is the pleasant by the way in which they raise the question. So let us draw a list of the positions taken respectively by Socrates, Protagoras, and the human beings. Can someone make a drawing at the blackboard?

Socrates (S)
good = pleasant, G=P
supremacy of knowledge is the other assertion.

Protagoras (P)
Regarding the first point: questionable. We do not know, because he simply didn't commit himself.
But supremacy of knowledge. The same.

The Human Beings
They say the good differs from the pleasant; and they assert the inferiority of knowledge

LS: Well, can we not draw safely this inference: that Protagoras is *slightly* closer than Socrates to the view of the many? Because in one point, Protagoras is not so clearly

opposed to the many as Socrates is. Is this clear? Now despite this fact, Protagoras has a much greater contempt for the opinion of the many than Socrates has, as you see from his final remark. Or perhaps—this we cannot know—he doesn't wish to discuss this whole issue. And the reason might be this, if we take some contemporary examples as keys, which is always legitimate but always dangerous: supremacy of knowledge means the superiority of the intellectuals to the nonintellectuals, in present-day language. And which intellectual wouldn't believe in this kind of supremacy? But to demand that within the individual intellectual the intellect should control his desire for reputation and wealth, this probably would go too far for him. Well, we must see to what extent this nasty suspicion is justified in the case of Protagoras. So now the next point.

Mr. Reinken:
I believe, I said, that they may be of use in helping us to discover how courage is related to the other parts of virtue. (353b)

LS: Yes. Now the investigation of the popular view regarding the power of pleasure is important for the understanding of the relation of courage to the other virtues. Why? We find a key in the next line, if you only begin the next sentence.

Mr. Reinken:
If you are disposed to abide by our agreement—

LS: Yes, "to abide," to stick to, to stay there, to make it stand there. That is the key word. If knowledge is to be quasi-omnipotent, it must be able to resist pleasure, etc.; it must be able to take a firm stand. It must include courage—the virtue by which we are able to take a firm stand is [what is] meant by courage; the so-called courage which is swayed by pleasure is not truly courage. Now the power over the pleasures is ordinarily called temperance or moderation, and this would indeed mean that moderation and courage are identical, which would of course follow anyway, given the unity of the virtues. But this point is developed, for example, in the *Laches*, in the dialogue called *Laches* at some length. Good. And now let us read the whole speech of [Socrates].[4]

Mr. Reinken:
If you are disposed to abide by our agreement that I should show the way in which, as I think, our recent difficulty is most likely to be cleared up, do you follow. But if not, never mind.
You are quite right, he said; and I would have you proceed as you have begun. (353b)

LS: Now Socrates gives Protagoras, as you see, another opportunity to make the same choice as he had done in 351e. He makes it now much more explicit, however, that Protagoras follow him: formerly, he had only spoken of his, Socrates's, leading. This is the underlying suggestion. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Well then—

LS: Here there is a difficulty here which I cannot dispose of. "If you do not wish—if it is agreeable to you, I let it go." "I let it go." And the Greek word is "I let it be pleased," *Eō chairein*. Whether there is any indication of a broader content, I cannot say. The mere fact that there is a double conditional sentence—"if you do not wish, if it is all right with you, I will let go"—is strange. I mention this only as one of the many points which I cannot resolve. Yes, now how does he go on?

Mr. Reinken:
Well then, I said, let me suppose that they repeat their question: What account do you give of that which, in our way of speaking, is termed "being overcome by pleasure"? I should answer thus: Listen, and Protagoras and I will endeavor to show you. (353c)

LS: Socrates is now going to tell the many, on behalf of himself and Protagoras, what the many mean when they say that the many are overcome by pleasure. Very complicated, I can tell you. But it is obvious that the many have a just claim to hear what this phenomenon, which is undeniable, means if it does not mean being overcome by pleasures. And Socrates will answer this question for them, but he speaks now for Protagoras. Socrates has him in his hip pocket; he [Protagoras] has nothing else for himself to say. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
When men are overcome by eating and drinking and sexual desires which are pleasant, and they, knowing them to be evil, nevertheless indulge in them, would you not say that they were overcome by pleasure? They will not deny this. (353c)

LS: Now wait. He speaks here also addressing these men as "human beings," that is important. When you speak of this thing, "overcome by pleasure," you mean that you are overcome by sensual pleasures which are bad. That is the phenomenon they have in mind. Protagoras agrees that this is what the many would say. He is very cagey, as you see. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And suppose that you and I were to go on and ask them again: "In what way do you say that they are evil—in that they are pleasant and give pleasure at the moment, or because they cause disease and poverty and other like evils in the future? Would they still be evil if they simply gave pleasure and had no attendant evil consequences, regardless of the source and nature of the pleasure they gave?" Would they not answer, Protagoras, that they are not evil on account of the pleasure of the moment which they give, but on account of the afteraffects—diseases and the like?
I believe, said Protagoras, that the world in general— (353c-d)

LS: No, no, "the many" here; "that the many would give this answer." The many do not mean that those pleasant things by which they are overcome are bad because they are pleasant, but they call them bad only with a view to their bad consequences. Protagoras cautiously agrees that this would be the answer of the many, that "I believe." I am not so familiar with them, you see: "I believe." Now but what about those pleasant and bad

things which do not lead to sickness, poverty, and the like? For example, undetected adultery: it would follow that the many would not say that this is bad, yes? Or take the other case, of a deserter who through his desertion escapes death and wounds and acquires wealth (such cases have been reported): again, the many would be unable to regard this as bad. I mention this only because this subject will come up later on, after the discussion with the many is completely finished. Now what does Socrates say on that?

Mr. Reinken:
[Soc.:] And in causing diseases do they not cause pain? And in causing poverty do they not cause pain? They would agree to that also, if I am not mistaken? (353e-354a)

LS: No, "as I believe." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
as I believe.

LS: Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Protagoras assented.

LS: Now you see Socrates imitates Protagoras's caution and caginess: "I believe." Socrates and Protagoras completely agree that the many would understand by the bad consequences of pleasures, unpleasant consequences. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Then I should say to them, in my name and yours—

LS: Again, human beings, addressing them. All human beings, all homonids.

Mr. Reinken:
[humans]:[viii] Do you think them evil for any other reason, except because they end in pain and rob us of other pleasures? There again would they agree.
We both of us thought that they would. (354a)

LS: "We thought." They are taken all together. Now the agreement between Socrates and Protagoras, not regarding pleasure and pain but regarding the opinion of the many, is even more complete, we can say, than it was before. The bad means what lacks pleasure or what is painful. Yes, now?

Mr. Reinken:
And then we should take the question from the opposite point of view, and say: "Humans,[ix] when you speak of goods being painful, do you not mean remedial goods, such as gymnastic exercises, and military service, and the physician's use—" (354a)

[viii] "Humans" is added by Mr. Reinken.
[ix] In the translation: "Friends."

LS: By military service he means military campaigns. I suppose he means that as a matter of course.

Mr. Reinken: Okay.
"and the physician's use of burning, cutting, drugging, and starving? Are these the things which are good but painful?"—they would assent to me?
He agreed.
And do you call them good because they occasion the greatest immediate suffering and pain; or because, afterward, they bring health and physical well-being and the salvation of the city[x]— (354a-b)

LS: Salvations of cities.

Mr. Reinken:
salvations of cities, and power over others and wealth? (354b)

LS: They are also used. . . . Powers, plural, and wealth in the plural.

Mr. Reinken:
they would agree to the latter alternative, as I believe?[xi]

LS: Yes, "as I believe."

Mr. Reinken:
He assented.

LS: Good. Now the good things which are unpleasant, in contradistinction to the bad things which are pleasant, are unpleasant now and have good consequences in the future. Socrates does not in any way question the vulgar view here. Rule over others and wealth is as good an end of military campaigns as the salvation of the city. You see it is truly addressed to the vulgar opinion, to the human beings, as we see from the context. Do you want to say something, Mr. . . .

Student: Those things also have to be bad for some; to rule over other cities, that is a bad end.

LS: Yes, very good. Now how do you go on from here? To what extent do you consider the others?

Same Student: Well, in the view of the many I suppose that is not considered, but in Socrates's view that is clearly . . .

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[x] In the translation: "state."
[xi] In the translation: "if I am not mistaken."

LS: Yes, but still, the question itself: Under what heading would this be, what you raised? Under what heading would it come?

Same Student: What sort of thing is the good?

Student: Is the good just?

LS: Yes, justice. It would be justice, justice completely abstracted. And moderation, the control of desires; and courage, the control of fears . . . that is part of the whole story. It was very good that you mentioned that. Yes, and also in the way which he regards waging war merely for the sake of enrichment, and in particular of the enrichment of the individuals here as a goal not to be questioned is of course remarkable. [xii]Now we are in 353d5. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Are these things good for any other reason except that they end in pleasure and get rid of and avert pain? Are you looking to any other standard but pleasure and pain when you call them good?—they would acknowledge that they were not?
I think so, said Protagoras. (354b-c)

LS: Now wait, they would—"as I believe." "Nor do I; nor does it seem to me." He is cagey; Protagoras remains as cagey as he was before. Socrates says clearly: the good is the pleasant. The many have no other standard than the pleasant. The good things which they choose, they choose as pleasant or with a view to their pleasant consequences. Protagoras agrees that the many would say that. He doesn't say anything about his view up to this point. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And do you not pursue pleasure as a good, and avoid—

LS: And "you" is of course here (it can't come out in the English) [5]in the plural and it is naturally the many, not Protagoras.

Mr. Reinken:
And do you not pursue pleasure as a good, and avoid pain as an evil? (354c)

LS: Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
He assented.
Then you think that pain is an evil and pleasure is a good; and even pleasure you deem an evil, when it robs you of greater pleasures than it gives, or causes pains greater than the pleasure. If, however, you call pleasure an evil in relation to some other end or standard, you will be able to show us that standard. But you have none to show.
I do not think that they have, said Protagoras. (354c-d)

[xii] There is a brief inaudible exchange with a student at this point.

LS: You see, the many regard certain pleasant things as bad only from the point of view of pleasure. Protagoras again agrees as to the many holding this view. Socrates is very circumstantial here, as you see, but for one reason he speaks to the many, people supposedly very slow-witted. And of course, while this thing which is easy to understand—everyone knows this kind of hedonism since his childhood, more or less today, and it has been elaborated many times since—but this makes us easily forget this strange happening here. While what is taught is very simple to understand, the way in which it is taught is very complicated because we must also see [that] Socrates wants to convince Protagoras, and Protagoras doesn't say a word. Protagoras only says the many would say that, and he keeps his own view back. Yes. Now where were we? In d4, I believe.

Mr. Reinken:
And again, have you not a similar way of speaking about pain? You call pain a good when it takes away greater pains than those which it has, or gives pleasures greater than the pains—then if you have some other standard than pleasure and pain to which you refer when you call actual pain a good, you can show us what that is. But you cannot. True, said Protagoras. (354d-e)

LS: Yes, it is a slightly different answer. The many regard certain unpleasant things as good, of course also with a view to pleasure; there is no independent standard. Protagoras's reply is now ambiguous. He doesn't say: That is what the many say. Is he now willing to concede that the good is identical with the pleasant, as Socrates wants him to concede? We do not know. Well, I will only tell you one thing that you all have heard somewhere, sometime, and somehow about the calculus of pleasures, and that the whole moral problem consists in a calculus of pleasures. This is the thought that is here developed for the first time. And if this is so, if the moral problem is a calculus of pleasure, then of course virtue is knowledge. Choosing the good means choosing the pleasant i.e., the greatest pleasure; and that is a mathematical problem—well, in the mathematics of pleasure, which is not quite the same as that of numbers and geometrical figures—and that is what he is working his way to. But the circumstantial and elaborate character is due not to the novelty of the thought, because the thought is easy to follow, but to the particular caginess of Protagoras, who does not wish to grant what Socrates wants him to grant for some reason which we do not yet know. Yes?[xiii]

Mr. Reinken:
Suppose again, I said, that the world says to me: Why do you spend[xiv] many words and speak in many ways on this subject? (353e)

LS: You see, "why such a long disquisition? We have understood you all along." Yes? So the thing which bothers us, the length of this disquisition, bothers even the many. Yes?

[xiii] The tape was changed at this point.
[xiv] In the translation: "to what purpose do you spend."

Mr. Reinken:
Excuse me, humans,[xv] I should reply; but in the first place there is a difficulty in explaining the meaning of the expression "overcome by pleasure";[xvi] and the whole argument turns upon this. And even now, if you see any possible way in which evil can be explained as other than pain, or good as other than pleasure, you may still retract. Are you satisfied, then, at having a life of pleasure which is without pain? If you are, and if you are unable to show any good or evil which does not end in pleasure and pain, hear the consequences. (354e-355a)

LS: Now you see by the emphasis that he [Socrates] speaks here alone for himself: If you were to ask *me*, I would reply. He disassociates himself now from Protagoras. In other words, he reminds Protagoras of the difference between them regarding the relation of the good and the pleasant or regarding the relation of courage and wisdom. Socrates tells these people, these many: By what you have already admitted, you are already refuted. He gives them an opportunity to retract their admissions, just such as he has given that to Protagoras. He treats the many as he had treated Protagoras. And this is of course justified because we do not know where Protagoras stands; maybe he shares the view of the many. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
If what you say is true, then the statement is absurd which affirms that a man often does evil knowingly when he might abstain, because he is seduced and overpowered by pleasure; or again, when you say that a man knowingly refuses to do what is good because he is overcome by pleasure of the moment. And that this is ridiculous will be evident if only we give up the use of various names, such as pleasant and painful, and good and evil. As there are two things, let us call them by two names—first, good and evil, and then pleasant and painful. Assuming this, let us go on to say that a man does evil knowing that he does evil. But some one will ask: Why? Because he is overcome, is the first answer. (355a-c)

LS: No, "but if someone asks us."

Mr. Reinken:
Because he is overcome, the first man says. And by what is he overcome?

LS: No, "he is overcome, we will say." By what? That one, the questioner will ask us.

Mr. Reinken:
And by what is he overcome? the inquirer will proceed to ask us. And we shall no longer be able to reply, "by pleasure"; for the name of pleasure has been exchanged for that of good. In our answer, then, we shall only say that he is overcome. By what? he will reiterate. By the good, we shall have to reply. (355c)

[xv] In the translation: "friends."
[xvi] In the translation: "it is not easy to explain what that is which you call 'being overcome by pleasure.'"

LS: "By Zeus."

Mr. Reinken:
By Zeus.

LS: Now the proposal of Socrates is extremely simple: If the good is the pleasant and the bad is the unpleasant, then let us use only one of these pairs of opposites, otherwise we confuse the issue. Let us speak either of good and bad or of pleasant and unpleasant.[xvii] . . . If the good is the pleasant, it is ridiculous to say [that] men choose the bad knowing that it is bad because they are overcome by the pleasure, for they mean that men choose the bad knowing that it is bad because they are overcome by the good. A ridiculous statement. And this is emphasized by the fact that Socrates swears here "by Zeus." You know he swears very rarely in the *Protagoras*. Apart from the Hippocrates section, very few oaths: only one oath of Protagoras, only one oath of Prodicus, and one oath of Socrates, and this is the last one after a long time. Who swears? Obviously Socrates and someone else, because he says: "By the good, we shall say, by Zeus." Not necessary. It could be Socrates alone; it also could mean that it belongs to him who makes the sermon. That is very dark. Yes. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Nay, but our questioner will rejoin with a laugh, if he be one of the swaggering sort. (355c)

LS: Immediately after the oath, there is this reference to the *hubristēs*, to the man of insolent pride or the man given to mockery and laughing. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
That is too ridiculous, that a man should do what he knows to be evil when he ought not, because he is overcome by good. Is that, he will ask, because the good was worthy or not worthy of conquering the evil? And in answer to that we shall obviously reply: Because it was not worthy, for if it had been worthy, then he who, as we say, was overcome by pleasure, would not have been wrong. (355d)

LS: In other words, we blame this man, and therefore the thing which he preferred must not have deserved to have been preferred. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
But how, he will reply, can the good be unworthy of the evil—

LS: He does say "perhaps." Why he omits it I do not know.

Mr. Reinken:
he will perhaps reply, can the good be unworthy of the evil, or the evil of the good? Is not the real explanation that they are out of proportion to one another, either as greater and smaller, or more and fewer? This we cannot deny. And when you speak— (355d-e)

[xvii] The tape skips at this point.

LS: You see, Socrates is now surely speaking together with the many against this invisible questioner whom he has conjured out of pure thought. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And when you speak of being overcome, What do you mean, he will say, but that you choose the greater evil in exchange for the lesser good? Admitted. And now let us substitute the names of pleasure and pain for good and evil, and say, not as before— (355e)

LS: Now one moment. The questioner, he says here, might solve the difficulty, [6]perhaps, by saying that men get the greater evil as a price of the lesser good, and somehow this seems to be a satisfactory answer. Why is it satisfactory? He takes away, first of all, the whole complication between the two couples of opposites: we have only one couple of opposites. And something else? Well, if you do not see it now, you will see it in the sequel. Good.

Mr. Reinken:
and say, now let us substitute the names of pleasure and pain—

LS: So do you see what Socrates proposes? The vulgar statement, the ordinary statement is in terms of two pairs of opposites—good and bad, pleasant and unpleasant—and this leads to confusion. Either we must read it in terms of a single pair of opposites—we have stated the difficulty now in terms of the opposites good and bad, and now we state it in terms of the opposites pleasant and unpleasant. Socrates talks for slow learners, because others might be able to figure it out on the basis of the first one.

Mr. Reinken: Is it where in his first version the greater evil and the lesser good, he has now managed to show that being overcome is purely a matter of bad measurement?

LS: Yes, but it is not yet brought out. Exactly. Now let us read the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
And now let us substitute the names of pleasure and pain for good and evil, and say, not as before, that a man does what is evil knowingly, but that he does what is painful knowingly, and because he is overcome by pleasure which is unworthy to overcome. Are there any circumstances in which pleasure is inferior to pain other than when there is an excess and defect in their mutual relation, which means that they become greater and smaller, and more and fewer, and differ in degree? For if any one says: Yes, Socrates, but the pleasure of the moment differs widely from future pleasure and pain, to that I should reply: And do they differ in anything but in pleasure and pain? There is nothing else. And do you, like a skillful weigher, put in the balance the pleasures and the pains, and their nearness and distance, and weigh them, and then say which outweighs the other? If you weigh pleasures against pleasures, you of course should take the more and greater; or if you weigh pains against pains, you should take the fewer and the less; or if pleasures against pains, then that course of action should be taken in which the painful is exceeded

by the pleasant, whether the distant by the near or the near by the distant; and you avoid that course of action in which the pleasant is exceeded by the painful. Would you not admit, O humans,[xviii] that this is true? I know that they cannot deny this.
He agreed with me. (355e-356c)

LS: Ya, you see, no direct speech, "he held the same view." I mean, wholly unemphatic. Protagoras is here in no way visible, although the whole thing is made for him. The same story is now stated from the point of view of the opposition of the pleasant and the painful. Man chooses the painful knowing that it is painful, overcome by pleasure. But here there is no reference to anything being ridiculous; there is no use of an oath in this connection although it is strictly parallel, but something [is] new, clearer than in the parallel passage: weighing. *The* thing which will save us is the weighing, measuring, counting of pleasures. We will discuss this in detail next time. This leads then on to the proposal [that] what we need is science, wisdom, the science of measuring the good, of weighing and counting the good: and that is exactly what the sophists do. Let us anticipate this, [so] that we are not completely in the dark. Let us read now 357d at the end and e.

Mr. Reinken:
[Soc.:] And you admitted further that they err, not only from defect of knowledge in general, but of that particular knowledge which, as you also agreed earlier in the discussion, is called measuring. And you are also aware that the erring act which is done without knowledge is done in ignorance. This, therefore, is the meaning of being overcome by pleasure—ignorance, and that the greatest. And our friends Protagoras and Prodicus and Hippias declare that they are the physicians of ignorance; but you, who are under the mistaken impression that ignorance is not the cause, and that the art of which I am speaking cannot be taught, neither go yourselves, nor send your children to the Sophists, who are the teachers of these things; you are concerned about your money and give them none; and the result is that you are the worse off both in public and private life. (357d-e)

LS: Yes. In other words, Socrates makes the case for sophistry much more powerful than Protagoras ever did. He beats him on his home ground. You know, he had beaten him on many grounds, but now even on his on his home ground. That he has done. Now let us look at our poor Hippocrates after the discussion has arrived at this point. What will Hippocrates do now, I mean, if we do not go beyond that? Yes?

Student: Give his money to Socrates.

LS: To Socrates? Why not to Protagoras?

Same Student: Socrates has proven to be the better of the two.

[xviii] In the translation: "my friends."

LS: I see. But if he is slightly less intelligent than perhaps you, and takes very literally what Socrates says, he would go to—yes?[xix]

LS: Yes, but what does this mean if we are confronted by such a specific question here? Here we have this point that Socrates has proven to the satisfaction of the wisest men present, naturally. Why to the satisfaction of the wisest men present, Protagoras, Hippias, and Prodicus? Why are they satisfied?

Student: Because it supports their contention.

LS: Yes, it is to their interest. Very simply, sure. Just as in the case of medicine; the goodness of medicine would not be disliked by the AMA,[xx] or take a similar case. That is clear.

Mr. Reinken: It seems to me that the most likely candidate for Hippocrates is Hippias.

LS: Very good, very good. Yes. Why?

Mr. Reinken: Measuring.

LS: So in other words, Socrates beats the drum for sophistry but not for the brand of Protagoras. Protagoras had spoken with contempt of the arts of measurement. [LS chuckles] Hippias's specialty. You see? So Protagoras cannot be too pleased. And if Hippocrates has any understanding, he sees that the notion to go to Protagoras isn't good: then he has to sweat through mathematics, which he won't like anyway, and who knows what else.[xxi] Sure, that is evident. I think that is true. Good.

But what about this argument itself? If we can measure, weigh, and so on the pleasures and pains, only then can we make wise choices. He gives later on the example of the errors we commit regarding things owing to distance and nearness. You know, a house looks smaller[xxii] far away, and so that we have to measure it somewhere either directly or indirectly to see what the true greatness of the house is and not the appearing greatness. Now the true pleasure afforded by a present beauty queen: How do you measure that against the bad consequences? What are the—well, perhaps you know [LS laughs] what the possible bad consequences are and can take them into consideration, that's all right. But there is another simple point, a key point which you have to take into consideration, and where the example does not quite fit, because in the case of things in space, as we say, distances, we measure them. That is not too difficult. But what about the distances in time? In the first place, say, past pleasures and pains would of course in no way enter into our calculation of future pleasures. What about the future pleasures and pains?

Student: There is always a question as to whether they will be fulfilled.

[xix] There is an inaudible exchange between Strauss and a student at this point.
[xx] The American Medical Association.
[xxi] Strauss barely suppresses laughter here as he speaks.
[xxii] Strauss says "bigger," perhaps a misstatement.

LS: Because of the power of chance, yes, but still there is one clear point: How far ahead should you look? Should you look forward to one hundred twenty years, or only to seventy? It makes all the difference, yes? Or maybe only fifty? And furthermore, there comes up this question: If you are confronted with what we call the presence of death, is it still possible for most people to measure, and count, and figure quietly without being afraid of death? That is also a point, because we have to consider not only pleasure and pain in the narrow sense, but of course also fears and expectations, painful or pleasurable expectations. There are quite a few difficulties. Yes?

Student: What about the Simonides section? . . . Do we have to say that Socrates is implicitly criticizing or disagreeing with Simonides?

LS: I do not know. I mean, hitherto I have not found a clear sign of that. . . . By the way, you must not forget this sketch of a hedonistic doctrine. When Xenophon makes an experiment with hedonism in his dialogue called *Hiero*, he entrusts that to Simonides, the poet Simonides. Simonides, if I remember well, was said to have coined the word *hēdonē*, the Greek word for pleasure.[xxiii] Whatever may be wrong with Simonides, that does not come out in this dialogue. The question more generally stated is: Why is the identification of the good and pleasant the basis of the argument? Now one way of answering the question is of course what follows from this premise: What does Socrates get out of it? And we see he gets out of it the justification of sophistry which he is trying to get. In other words, he says: Under what conditions would it make sense to say that virtue is knowledge and teachable in the way in which the sophists taught it? And he answers that question in this way: If the objects of human action were homogeneous in such a way that they can be figured out the more and less by their measuring and so on, in that case virtue would be knowledge. But of course it forgets one little thing: the best art of measuring that would enable a man only to say, "This is better than that," would it guarantee that he would overcome the pleasure of the moment or the fear of the moment? You know this would of course remain, this difficulty. Now when we look at that—and I will try to develop it more fully later—courage is the great theme here, and that would mean in terms of the specific question of being overcome by fear, but instead the chief subject is [being] overcome by pleasure. Now what does this silence about being overcome by fear mean? And fear is of course the question of courage. Yes?

Mr. Shulsky: It would seem that is only in the question of being overcome by pleasures that can you even stop for this kind of calculation. Being overcome by fear is a much more immediate type of thing, you wouldn't have time to even think about it.

LS: Well, think of this beauty queen under particularly attractive circumstances—I am not good at developing that, but I hear there are people who write about these matters in great detail. This is perhaps not so simple, but again you have to consult the literature. But surely I have no doubt that the danger of present death—someone pointing a gun at

[xxiii] According to the standard Greek-English lexicon, the first instance of *hēdonē* is found in Simonides; see *Poetae Lyrici Graeci*, ed. T. Bergk, 4th ed., vol. 3 (Leipzing: Teubner, 1882), 419 (= Simonides 71).

you, and you don't have a gun—would probably induce almost all men to forget about present pleasure. Yes? That is the profound truth underlying Hobbes's doctrine and some other doctrines. You know that.

But what I am driving at is something else. How should I begin to make this clear? In a Platonic dialogue, we must of course always think about the subject matter; in this case pleasure, pain, fear, etc. But we must also never forget about the individuals, the characters. Now the chief character of this dialogue is, as the title indicates, Protagoras. Now what about Protagoras in this: Is he such a hero regarding self-control? We don't know. We don't know. But one thing we do know about him, because he had made it very clear earlier in the dialogue. Now let me do like very poor teachers who phrase the question from the end. No, well, I will not try it. [LS laughs] I got a trick because it wouldn't work at this moment. But there is one striking difference between the pleasures—and let us take this greatest case, that of sexual pleasures and the fear of death. Now do we know anything in general about them from the literature about their distribution from the various age groups? I think we do, and the literature is easily available. Plato's *Republic*, beginning: Cephalus. He is an old man, and he is so glad to be old because he is no longer subject to that savage master, sexual desire. But he has another problem instead of it, which he did not have before. What was that? Fear of death. So, crudely spoken, this kind of desire, sexual desire, is more characteristic of youth, and fear of death is more characteristic of old age. In which group does Protagoras belong? I mean is he young, is he old?

Student: He is old.

LS: He says so. He could be the father of everyone present. He is as old, let us say, as Cephalus. Does he show any trace of fear of death?

Student: He took Socrates's advice regarding speaking in Athens.

LS: I beg your pardon.

Same Student: He took Socrates's advice regarding speaking in Athens.

LS: Sure, but that does not necessarily mean fear of death. It could mean fear of inconvenience: if he has to leave town within an hour, that is very unpleasant. Yes?

Mr. Bruell: He was cautious about answering whether the good was the pleasant and said look into the rest. . . .

LS: Yes, but does he show in his conduct any sign of fear of death? I believe we can say no. And I will make this tentative suggestion: that he is in this sense of the term a courageous man. And then we would have this paradoxical situation: that Hippocrates is courageous and the potential pupil, and Protagoras the potential teacher. That is a ground on which they can meet. But the thing goes somewhat deeper, and that is the point to which Mr. Bruell alluded. Protagoras's peculiarity, as he points out, is his frankness, his

candor. He takes the risk at first glance which no one else has taken before: a courageous man. Now from this point of view, certain features which we have observed but which we have perhaps not sufficiently understood or appreciated become important. We are in Hades. You know this by the allusions to Homer. Socrates has gone down to Hades, to the world of the dead. And it is in those days nothing dreary or terrible about it, it was just fine. Protagoras was compared in a certain way by indirection to Achilles, *the* man of courage, but not to Achilles in Hades, because in Hades Achilles had lost all belief in courage and said it is much better to be a day laborer in the light of the sun than to be a great hero.

Now then of course we would have to watch and to examine Protagoras's courage, particularly what kind of courage it is. In the case of Hippocrates, we can be sure that this is something very well, you know, this is a young boy of eighteen or whatever the age is, and who is very good at pursuing runaway slaves. If that is manliness or courage, then he is manly. Is it true manliness? And we would have to raise the question regarding Protagoras's manliness as well. Is his courage due to his wisdom? Well, we would first have to know: Is he wise? I believe that we can say without exaggerating in any way that he is not wise. A man who says, "I teach virtue," and who has never given serious thought to the question of whether virtue is one or many and how the parts are related cannot be called wise. So his courage is really different from wisdom. His courage is due to his excellent health and great success in the world, i.e., to a kind of being well advised, a kind of it. And above all, a man who says, "I come to Athens and I can make every Athenian good, better than anyone else could ever have made him," that requires a kind of courage, doesn't it? In other words, to what extent is his courage the same as what we would now call his nerve?

Now to take an extreme step which is of course necessary as a suggestion—it may be wrong, it may not be tenable in the long run. He is not wise, this much we know. How far is he moderate and just? Hard to say, because here he doesn't steal silver spoons or anything else. Impious? We do not know directly, but a bit. Now let us look at 349d5, to end our seminar. "In the following way you will know that I say the truth."

Mr. Reinken:
[Protag.:] You may observe that many men are utterly unrighteous, impious, self-indulgent, ignorant, who are nevertheless remarkable for their courage.

LS: Could he not . . . speak about himself? [LS laughs] We don't know. I believe that it is important, and I must say I was glad that I saw first that Hippocrates is courageous (I had completely forgotten that), and then I saw that Protagoras is in a sense *very* courageous. I mean, he is not a man who raises an enormous claim, an enormous claim which he cannot possibly fulfill.[xxiv] Can one not say of this man in the loose meaning of the word that he has an amazing courage? Yes?

Student: But isn't this really foolhardiness . . .

[xxiv] It is possible that Strauss meant "Is he not a man who raises . . . ?"

LS: Yes, that is clear. The question would still remain—although we have a loose usage all the time, which cannot be helped and is necessary—whether in the strict sense of the word, can there be courage without wisdom? Does not courage imply wisdom? That is of course a very good point. But Protagoras . . . nevertheless might be true. Good.

But I remind you of the three questions with which I started. Why the courage question? I believe I have given at least materials useful for an answer to the question. Why the pleasure, the hedonistic proposition, why does this come in? And thirdly, why this long discussion with the human beings, i.e., a group of men, and they are not Protagoras but the human beings and their irrelevant opinions about pleasure and pain . . . Yes?

Student: I don't understand on what grounds that they were in Hades. But I suppose . . .

LS: Oh no, no, no. That was very strict. You know the answer.[xxv] When he describes what was going on he quotes verses from the *Odyssey* which Odysseus uses for describing Hades, about the individuals in Hades, Tantalus and so on. Good.

There is a fourth question, to which I do not have an answer: How to give the examination. [Laughter] I think we need a special session to coach you for the examination.

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[1] LS says "Hippias," evidently in error.
[2] Deleted "**LS:** Now, let us first see what Socrates said. No I'm sorry, please read on."
[3] Deleted "is incompatible"
[4] Here LS's voice trails off; he may say "Protagoras."
[5] Deleted "is."
[6] Deleted "he might say"

[xxv] There is an inaudible exchange between Strauss and a student at this point.

Session 15: May 17, 1965

The Hedonistic Calculus and the Problem of Courage (356c–359c)

Leo Strauss: We stopped around 356c, if I remember well. That is Socrates's discussion together with Protagoras with the human beings or with the many, with the vulgar. And we were in the midst of this. I remind you briefly of the context. There was one passage which we did not sufficiently consider. Now the question is this. According to both Socrates and Protagoras, knowledge, science, is a most powerful thing in man, and yet we see that people knowing the better choose the worse, overcome by pleasure and other passions. But the human beings who make this objection understand by better or worse, or rather by good and bad, the pleasant and the painful. That was explained to them at painful length. And that means that people knowing the more pleasant choose the more painful, overcome by pleasure. Yes? Do I have to illustrate it by a homely example, or is it clear enough? Good. And now let us turn first to 356a5 to 7. Well, perhaps you read 356a altogether, so that we see the context of this.

Mr. Reinken:
[Soc.:] Are there any circumstances in which pleasure is inferior to pain other than when there is an excess and defect in their mutual relation, which means that they become greater and smaller, and more and fewer, and differ in degree? For if any one says, Yes, Socrates, but the pleasure of the moment differs widely from future pleasure and pain— (356a)

LS: Yes, that is the one we want. It is true [that] the pleasure we have at a given moment, say, from some candies or a cigarette, may be very trivial compared with the pain which we get afterward. Yet there is an enormous difference between the present pleasure and the future pain. The present has a singular power. Now Socrates's reply is to this effect: the difference of present and future is not a difference in regard to the quantity of pleasure. In other words, the pleasure of the candy now is quantitatively the same as the pleasure of the candy at some future or any other time. Now if present pleasure is *x* and the pain to which it leads is 1000*x*, one must forego the present pleasure. Everyone knows that. It is as simple as that. But again, does not the present, as these vulgar people say, have a much greater power than the remote? This is a difficulty with which Socrates is saddled still, and Protagoras too. Now let us then go on from where we left off last time; that is 356c4.

Mr. Reinken:
He agreed with me.
Well, then, I shall say, if you agree so far, be so good as to answer me a question: Do not objects of the same size appear larger to your sight when near, and smaller when at a distance? They will acknowledge that. (356c)

LS: Who says that?

Mr. Reinken: It seems to be Socrates.

LS: No, that's Protagoras. That's Protagoras. Now he discusses how the many answer the question of how presence, nearness and future remoteness affect how magnitudes appear to the many, these ants on whom we look down. Protagoras agrees with what Socrates says about what the many will say—you remember his caginess from last time; he doesn't wish to be caught. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And the same holds of thickness and number; also sounds, which are in themselves equal, are greater when near, and lesser when at a distance. (356c)

LS: Now wait. Now he says that what is true of length is true also of number, of manyness, and of thickness, and of sounds. I do not quite understand this selection of examples. Now what is Protagoras's answer here?

Mr. Reinken:
They will grant that also. (356e)

LS: No, "They would say that." . . . It's the Greek optative with *an*, not the indicative. Protagoras's answer is here slightly qualified. Perhaps we find a reason in what follows. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Now suppose doing well to consist in doing or choosing the greater, and in not doing or in avoiding the less, what would be the saving principle— (356d)

LS: "The greater length," yes? Length, literally. Because otherwise "great" might be misunderstood. In other words, if our happiness would consist in getting the greatest possible length. Yes, good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
what would be the saving principle of human life?

LS: No, simply, "what would be the salvation of life?" Salvation of life, meaning of life as such plus happiness as such. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Would it be the art of measuring or the power of appearance? (356d)

LS: "The power of what comes to sight." You know the power, for example, the candy *now*, as being now before us, a power which the candy, say, in Indochina would not have. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Is not the latter that deceiving art which makes us wander up and down— (356d)

LS: "Art," he says? Of course not an art: "the power of the appearing things," not an art. "The power of the appearing made—" Yes.

Mr. Reinken:
that deceiving power which makes us wander up and down and take at one time the things of which we repent at another, both in our actions and in our choice of things great and small? But the art of measurement would invalidate the power of appearance and, showing the truth, would fain teach the soul at last to find lasting rest in the truth, and would thus save our life. Would not mankind generally— (356d-e)

LS: Again, "the human beings." There is this ambiguity.

Mr. Reinken:
Would not the humans acknowledge that the art which accomplishes this result is the art of measurement?
Yes, he said, the art of measurement. (356e)

LS: So in other words, here again: Would the many, or the humans, not agree? The art of measurement. He agreed. Both the many and Protagoras agree, but they agree to different things. The many agree that the measuring art is *the* help, and Protagoras only agrees that the many would say so.

In the case of lengths, we deprive the appearances of their power by the art of measuring. I believe this does not need any comment. Yes? If we see a man very far away, he looks as if he were two feet high, and then we send someone there, or perhaps by some clever devices we can measure him from here, and then we see he is six [1][feet]. And of course then the impression he makes on us is completely exploded by the measuring. That is clear. But since he has referred to sounds: Can sounds be measured? Or to make it more simple, can smells be measured? We say one smell is stronger or greater than another, or lesser than another, but can we measure them? By preferring now a pleasant smell to an unpleasant one, we might get in the end a terrible stench. That is the same problem. Do we need measuring in order to prefer now the unpleasant smell to that perfume? And does measuring as such overcome the attractiveness of the present pleasant smell? After all, [that] this fellow who looks as though he is two feet high is not attractive, it doesn't make the slightest difference to us if we find out that he is six feet [high]. At any rate, not in all cases, it seems, can the power of the appearance be overcome by measuring. Now the example of sounds is not so very good, because today we would of course speak of wavelengths. But these are no longer sounds as sounds; these are things which go with sounds. And now I believe there are no smell waves, are there? Do they have any device for measuring smells?

Mr. Reinken: No, no, it's quite complicated chemistry.

LS: In other words, for all practical purposes we have to rely on our sense of smell, so in this situation . . . Yes?

Student: I'm not quite clear on that, because there really is no example of smell given, and secondly, with regard to sound, there is no mention of the quality of sound; there is no mention of discord and harmony. It seems to be just an—

LS: No, he speaks here only of greater and smaller sounds. If someone fires a gun here and if he fires a gun, say, at City Hall, assuming we would hear it, then obviously the sound we hear in this room would be much greater than the sound we would hear when—that is what he means. Very simple.

Same Student: All right, so why isn't the art of measuring the important thing?

LS: The point is this: there is no application made in the sequel of the art of measuring sounds anyway. So in other words, the fact that there is in a certain dimension the greater and the lesser does not yet prove that there is an art of measurement. That is the point I tried to make, and since I thought the example of smell is more simple, because we don't know of smell waves in the way in which we know of sound waves, that was the only reason I mentioned it. But it is perfectly legitimate, of course, if you use the example of smell, or to think of sound, or to think of smell or of other things where there are other sense perceptions. For example, something is more pungent, some food is more pungent than the other: there is also a more and a less, and yet there is not necessarily an art of measurement. You expose your tongue to both sense impressions, and where you get the stronger impression then you say the smell or taste is strong.

At any rate, but disregarding these grave difficulties, in the case which Socrates mentions regarding sheer length, by measuring instead of merely trusting the sense experience we bring it about that the soul stands by the truth, abides by the truth. Here again is the connection between knowledge and courage, if courage means to stand by something respectable—say, by the truth. This firmness of knowledge is something akin to the firmness of the courageous man. It brings it about also that we save our life, as he puts it here, and saving our lives is at least not the primary function of courage. You see that *the* problem with which we are concerned here is the relation of knowledge and courage. The answer of Protagoras is ambiguous. One can also say that he seems to admit that he agrees as well as the many do. This is not quite as unambiguous as I said before. Now we come to another complication.

Mr. Reinken:
Suppose, again, the salvation of life to depend on the choice of odd and even, and on the knowledge of when a man ought to choose the greater or less, either in reference to the same quantity or to another, and whether near or at a distance. What would be the principle that makes— (356e)

LS: Not "principle." "What would save us our lives?" Plato speaks much less of principle than we, including the translators of Plato, do—which doesn't mean that he doesn't think less of principle than we and the translators. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Would not knowledge? —a knowledge of measuring, since this is the art that has to do with excess and defect, and a knowledge of number, when the question is of odd and even? The many humans[i] will assent, will they not? (357a)

LS: No. Now is this art, since the subject is odd and even, any art other than arithmetic, he says. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
The world will assent, will they not?

LS: No, no. Of course, "the human beings will assent." Would agree with us, or would they not? Now?

Mr. Reinken:
Protagoras himself thought that they would. (357a)

LS: "It seemed also to Protagoras that they would agree." You see it is a much more qualified answer. Now here is a complication. In the raising of the question here regarding the more or less—and this is of course a very good example, because many people are concerned with getting richer and richer, which means more dollars, more than can be expressed in American terms, and that is very appropriate here; but here the question is not simply choosing more, but choosing more at the right time. Do you see that? Read it again if there is any doubt about it. *When* one should correctly choose the more and when the less. In other words, there is a certain criticism of the so-called *homo economicus* who doesn't raise the question in this form except accidentally. Of course there is a time when the bullish and the bearish people—that is a difference of the time, but in a very different sense. The many would not see this crucial difference, and Protagoras therefore disassociates himself from them again. But these are of course only examples, the art of measurement and the art of counting, because that is the meaning which arithmetic has for the Greeks. What we call arithmetic was called by them logistics, the operation with numbers. Arithmetic is the knowledge of the numbers as numbers. It has nothing to do of course with the modern theory of numbers, but it is simply the knowledge of numbers. For example, if you have a very high and unusual number, of course always natural numbers, you know what the next number will be. Yes? Say, 456,812: we all know that it would be 456,813, but someone who has not learned numbers would not know it. Yes?

Student: You say that Protagoras disassociates himself from the answer of the many here because what are involved are additional considerations. But Socrates's question seems to be based on that preceding difference; it seems to take that into account. In other words,

[i] In the translation: "the world."

he is saying: Well, it depends on measurement in order to make a right choice; and then he says: People would admit this, would they not? It seems to me that people do take it into account.

LS: Ah, no. The key point is that the consideration of the right moment is not an arithmetical consideration. If it is a question of getting more and more money, that is easy; one million dollars is more than eight hundred thousand dollars. But whether one should do it now and whether that is the proper situation, the proper occasion, that we are not told by arithmetic. Good. Now let us continue, because now we come from the examples to our case. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Well then, humans—

LS: You clearly emphasize that.

Mr. Reinken:
I say to them; seeing that the salvation of life has been found to consist in the right choice of pleasures and pains— (357a)

LS: I.e., not of numbers or of lengths because these were only examples to illustrate it. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
in the choice of the more and the fewer, and the greater and the less, and the nearer and remoter, must not this measuring be a consideration of their excess and defect and equality in relation to each other?
This is undeniably true.
And this, as possessing measure, must undeniably also be an art and science?
They will agree, he said. (357b)

LS: "They will agree"; he doesn't say that he agrees. Good. Now in the case of pleasure as distinguished from sheer length and sheer number, one would have to consider the more or less, the greater or smaller, and the remoter and nearer. That means we would need an art of measurement which is at the same time the ordinary art of measurement and the art of arithmetic and yet preserves the temporal distance element; in other words, what takes into due consideration the present pleasure as a terrific attraction, a consideration which is not necessary in the other fields. So we have to consider, in order to act wisely: All right, this pleasure will bring us pain. But then again, practically speaking, when? In sixty years from now? I believe in the case of a man of my age there would be no consideration against it. This question is wholly alien to the strictly mathematical arts. They are of course here very important. Good. But at any rate, this is all admitted by the human beings and Protagoras, admitting that they would admit it, we have perfect agreement. And this will find its seal, its confirmation, very soon. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

[Soc.:] The nature of this art or science will be a matter of future consideration—

LS: One second. Not "nature": "what this art and science is, we will consider on another occasion." Now in other words, it has been proven that we need this kind of a measuring art, which is not the ordinary measuring art, but what it is, where we find it, and perhaps even whether it is possible, this will not be settled in the *Protagoras*. So we get a wonderful blank check and not more, and we do not know whether Protagoras or Socrates has anything in his bank, a phenomenon which we know also from present-day phenomena. Yes, go on.

Mr. Reinken:
but a demonstration *that* it is a science has been adequately made, and that is what you asked of me and Protagoras. At the time when you asked the question, if you remember, both of us were agreeing that there was nothing mightier than knowledge, and that knowledge, in whatever existing, must prevail over pleasure and all other things. And then you said that pleasure— (357b-c)

LS: "You" said. Let us say, the intellectuals say that the intellect is the more powerful thing and the nonintellectuals deny it. The line is as sharply drawn [as that]. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
that pleasure often prevails even over a man who has knowledge. And we refused to allow this, and you rejoined: O Protagoras and Socrates, what is the meaning of being overcome by pleasure if not this? Tell us what you call such an event? If we had immediately and at the time answered, "ignorance," you would have laughed at us. But now, in laughing at us, you will be laughing at yourselves— (357c-d)

LS: Yes. Now how has it been proven that it is only a matter of ignorance? By the example of length and other things: very simply, an optical illusion which can be corrected by measuring. And if someone would see that—to take an example from Rousseau which is quite impressive, in his *Emile* when he speaks at that time that there were much stricter notions than prevail today: What shall we do with a young man in order to prevent him from having intercourse too early in age outside of marriage? And Rousseau has a very simple device which he got from an old army officer. This man took his young son into a hospital of people in the last stage of syphilis, and said: This is what is in store for you. And that made a very deep impression on the boy.[ii] Something of [2]this kind of education is in another way of course always possible even still, as far as I know. So at any rate, now they have learned that what overcomes them is just ignorance; they do not see themselves as being ruined by such things or by the loss of their property, or loss of reputation or whatever it may be. Plainly not. That has now been settled.

Now here when Socrates says, "You ask us," he repeats literally what was said in 353a4 to 6. It is a very rare case, a literal repetition in Plato. The quotation marks are of course the additions of the modern editor; there are no quotation marks in the manuscript. There

[ii] See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile; or, On Education*, ed. and trans. Christopher Kelly and Allan Bloom (Hanover, NH: Darthmouth College Press, 2010), 385.

is only one tiny little wee bit of a change. He says now: "Tell us." He uses now the plural, whereas in the first version he had used the dual. In Greek there is a word, the dual form, which means "you two," which is grammatically different from "you" meaning more than two. And this trivial difference is however of some importance, because at that time there were only Socrates and Protagoras and now there are many, because this prepares what will happen in the near future: the enlargement of the Socrates–Protagoras group into one embracing also Hippias and Prodicus, as we shall see very soon. Now that he quotes so literally when reproducing a statement of the human beings is of course in accordance with the presupposed view of the human beings. Here you have to be very literal because of their lack of flexibility. We will find another case shortly where he quotes Protagoras and where the changes are much greater, because in the case of an intelligent man he wouldn't stick to every particular word which is not decisively important, but a man who is not flexible and thinks every little word might count, who has no judgment of what is important and what is not. I believe that this is the simplest explanation. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
for you also admitted that men err in their choice of pleasures and pains, that is, in their choice of good and evil, from defect of knowledge. And you admitted further that they err, not only from defect of knowledge in general, but of that particular knowledge which, as you also agreed earlier in the discussion, is called measuring. (357d)

LS: "The art of measuring," yes.

Mr. Reinken:
the art of measuring. And you are also aware that the erring act which is done without knowledge is done in ignorance. This, therefore, is the meaning of being overcome by pleasure—ignorance, and that the greatest. And our friends Protagoras and Prodicus and Hippias declare that they are the physicians of ignorance; but you, who are under the mistaken impression that ignorance is not the cause, and that the art of which I am speaking cannot be taught, neither go yourselves, nor send your children to the Sophists, who are the teachers of these things— (357d-e)

LS: A bit more literally: "you do not send them to the teachers of those things, these sophists here."

Mr. Reinken:
these Sophists here; you are concerned about your money and give them none; and the result is that you are the worse off both in public and private life. (357e-358a)

LS: Yes, now this is the conclusion of this section. Socrates presents himself here as a man who incites people, who pushes people forward to sophistry. The Greek word is *protreptic—protreptikos* and *sophistikēn*.[iii] That is of course terrific.

[iii] The tape is not entirely clear here, but this seems to be what Strauss says.

Now Socrates teaches Protagoras here how he should make propaganda, as we would say, for his own art: "That's is the way to do it, not the way you do it." And he also shows that Protagoras's claim to teach virtue stands and falls by the identification of virtue and knowledge,[iv] which Protagoras was unwilling to admit. Socrates of course admits now, as you see in this context, that virtue is teachable, which he had originally denied. The Athenians don't teach virtue, or the legislators of old don't teach virtue, but these men who possess that art of measurement, which has been sketched without its possibility having been established, this would be the true salvation of our lives. Well, I believe it is true that if we would choose a greater future evil now and we would see with the utmost veracity the terrible consequences to which it leads, if there would be such a knowledge which we could produce in the critical moment, it would have some influence on our actions. But the question is whether such an art exists, whether one would not have to proceed in an entirely different way.

Now I believe [that] here we are at an end, not of the last section of course, because we see there are still a couple of pages left, but there is a very important incision within the seventh and last section of the dialogue, and we should stop here for a moment and reconsider the whole last section. I told you what the difficulties are. The facts which we have to explain regarding the last section are these. First, why the emphasis on the question of courage? Secondly, why does Socrates try to prove the identity of wisdom and courage on the basis of the identification of the good with the pleasant? And third, why is this identification established in a fictitious dialogue between Socrates, who has Protagoras in his hip pocket at the time, and the human beings?

Now first, why the emphasis on courage? I will repeat things which I have said before, but I hope they are now more coherent and clearer. Protagoras asserts that surely courage is radically different from the other virtues and hence in particular from wisdom. Now why? Well, courage was the only virtue not yet discussed; hence it is the only virtue regarding which he can hope to maintain his original thesis regarding the parts of virtue, that they are independent of each other, separable from one another. But why did Socrates not bring in courage earlier? Socrates had led up to this pair of virtues: justice and piety here, moderation and wisdom there. Now the kinship of these two couples, of each of these two pairs, is more obvious than the kinship of courage with one of the two groups. Courage seems to be in a class by itself. Now why is this so? We must remember Protagoras's doctrine of virtue as developed in his long speech at the beginning, with the myth and around the myth. Political virtue, as he calls it there, is a virtue of human beings, human beings again in the technical meaning, not *hombres*. And that was said to consist of justice, piety, and moderation. We can say the virtue of the herd, understood in contradistinction to the virtue of the *hombres,* of which he did not speak there. In that long speech, he was silent on courage and wisdom; courage and wisdom are these higher qualities, these distinguishing qualities, and if anyone doubts that this distinction is alien to Plato he has only to read Callicles's speech in the *Gorgias*: the real he-man is characterized not by these herd virtues—justice, moderation, and piety—but by wisdom, intelligence, however you call it, and courage. Well, up to the present day, I don't believe

[iv] Strauss taps on the table for emphasis.

that Mr. Giancana[v] is proud of his justice, piety, and moderation, but he is mighty proud of his courage and his cleverness. Now the difficulty is, however, that Protagoras, in contradistinction to the ordinary man, is a teacher not of ordinary human beings but of potential *hombres*. Yet he clearly doesn't teach courage; he teaches only wisdom. He grafts wisdom onto preexisting courage, manliness, or however you call it. The pupil must come to him already possessing courage in this sense, self-assertion. And as we know, Hippocrates possesses it: he is called by Socrates himself courageous, *andreios*.

Now in the discussion in the last section, the chief concern is the relation between wisdom and pleasure. While the other passions were mentioned, the emphasis is certainly on pleasure. Can wisdom or knowledge be overcome by pleasure? The ability to resist the allurement of pleasure is ordinarily called moderation or temperance, *sōphrosynē*, not courage. Courage is rather the ability to resist fears, especially the fear of death. If we can trust old Cephalus at the beginning of the *Republic*, pleasure is more powerful in the young, while fear of death is greater in the old. Now Protagoras is old, but he does not show any sign of fear of death, even any awareness of death. He does mention death when he speaks of the many, when he speaks of capital punishment and social punishment in 325b3, but otherwise he does not refer to it at all. So Protagoras in this sense is also courageous. This is reinforced by the comparison with Achilles which is occasionally suggested. But Protagoras is surely wise. Every Athenian would say that. He is a living proof that courage is something different from wisdom. He has wisdom and courage, but the fact that Hippocrates has courage without having wisdom shows [that the two virtues are different].

Now a more important consideration: *the* peculiarity of Protagoras according to his own claim is his candor, his daring, his courage. It is true [that] he mentions in the same context that he uses certain precautionary measures, and somehow from a popular point of view a man who is very much concerned with precautionary measures is not an embodiment of courage. He has refuge to a myth, that is a refuge for him, to a myth which he himself has fabricated, so his courage is not simply courage but is in the broad sense of the term. Finally, and above all, his claim to teach virtue while he does not know what virtue is, as we have seen and as Socrates will tell him very soon: his nerve, in colloquial language, is also a kind of courage. One can say that the action of the dialogue as a whole consists in this: here is the courageous Hippocrates, here is the courageous Protagoras; Socrates tries to prevent the coming together of these two courageous individuals. Now Socrates himself is of course courageous in a different sense, and the most well-known document of that is the *Phaedo*, how he behaved on the day of his death. Now with whom is Socrates associated here in the dialogue?

Student: Prodicus.

LS: No, [3]not that.

Same Student: Alcibiades.

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[v] Sam Giancana (1908–1975), Chicago mafia boss.

LS: Alcibiades, yes. So there is a kind of Socrates–Alcibiades combination in contradistinction to the Protagoras–Hippocrates combination. Alcibiades of course was the most courageous and daring, in the vulgar sense of the word, of all; and there was absolutely nothing—incredible—including various acts of high treason and treachery etc., which he did not do. And this, I believe, is of some importance. While preventing the combination Protagoras–Hippocrates, Socrates benefits somehow from the combination Socrates–Alcibiades.

I turn now to the second and third questions, which are: Why is wisdom equal to courage to be proven on the basis of the equation of the good and the pleasant? And why is that equation established in a fictitious dialogue with the many? These two questions must be answered together, and my defective presentation was due to the fact that I did not know it before.

Now after having failed to prove that courage is wisdom in the first part of this argument, Socrates proposes that the good is identical with the pleasant, which Protagoras refuses to accept. Socrates then proposes that knowledge or wisdom is the supreme power in man, and Protagoras, [who lives on that], naturally accepts this[4]. To this extent there is clearly something in common between the present-day intellectual and certain people as different as Socrates and Protagoras in Greece. Now of course from the point of view of the sociologist, both Socrates and Protagoras are intellectuals. Can there be the slightest doubt that this is a true statement? For Plato, this community, so to say, in vital statistics, that they are counted as intellectuals by some bureaucrat or many bureaucrats, is very misleading because it all depends what *kind* of intellectual you are. Good.

Socrates brings up the fact that according to the many knowledge is inferior to pleasure and the other passions. Protagoras dismisses this view of the many with contempt: Who cares what the many say? I suppose he does this because he sees that this view of the many contradicts his view regarding the supremacy of knowledge, which he had stated immediately before on the ground that it would be especially disgraceful to him not to state that the intellect or science is the highest. Now the many imply that the good is different from the pleasant. Let me try to make this clear [LS writes on the blackboard][vi]

Socrates	*Protagoras*	*Many*
supremacy of intelligence	knowledge superior	knowledge inferior
good = pleasant	?	good ≠ pleasant

Now regarding the other point, Protagoras agrees with Socrates regarding the superiority of the intellect. That is, the many . . . shows immediately that Protagoras is somewhat closer to the many than Socrates is. Now when Socrates proves to the many, while addressing them on behalf of himself and of Protagoras, that the good is the pleasant, and what this entails regarding the status of knowledge, what does this mean? Let us turn to an earlier passage which I had not considered before in this connection, 333b to c. This is very shortly before the breakdown of the debate between Socrates and Protagoras, i.e.,

[vi] Because Strauss is at the board and some distance from the microphone, much of what he says is inaudible. The scheme that appears here is taken from the original transcript.

before the litigation scene. You know now what I mean by these terms, because otherwise I would always have to begin from the beginning, and this is not very practical. Now can you read that?

Mr. Reinken: 333b?

LS: b8, yes, shortly before the scene.

Mr. Reinken:
And now Protagoras, I said, we must finish the inquiry and not get lazy.[vii] Do you think that an unjust man can be self-controlled in his unjustice? (333b)

LS: Self-controlled has here also the meaning "can he be sound, can he be prudent?" That is more the meaning here. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
I should be ashamed, Socrates, he said, to acknowledge this which nevertheless many may be found to assert.

LS: "Many of the human beings say it." Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:
And shall I argue with them or with you, I replied?

LS: Well, perhaps more literally, "Should I argue against them or against you?" Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
I would rather, he said, that you should argue with the many first, if you will. (333c)

LS: Yes. You see, this has a certain similarity with our debate. Protagoras ascribes the view that men can act sensibly by acting unjustly to the many. And he refuses—he ascribes that view to the many because he would be ashamed to state it on his own, although it is clearly implied in his view of the five parts of virtue, that they are separable; and if they are separable you can have prudence, moderation, however you call it, and lack justice. We see here that Protagoras lacks the courage to state this opinion as his own and he took his position behind the apron strings, if I may say so, of the many. But this is ancient. Hours have passed. In the meantime, he has become still more cautious; naturally, he got one beating after another. Socrates has been taming him all the time. Now in the last section of the *Protagoras*, Socrates catches Protagoras by doing the reverse of what Protagoras did in the passage which we just read. In other words, Socrates follows Protagoras's precedent. Protagoras takes the many as his shield, and Socrates says: Well, what you can do I also can do. Now how does he do it? That is the interesting point.

[vii] In the translation: "and not give up."

In 333,[viii] Protagoras had presented an immoral view which he tacitly shared as the view of the many. Now in the last section, Socrates presents an immoral view which Protagoras tacitly shares but openly rejects as Socrates's own view. Socrates is courageous, sure; and the good is the pleasant. He first leads the many to admit openly that the good is identical with the pleasant. He leads the many, that is, to Protagoras's concealed view. He then makes it easy for Protagoras to accept this view accepted by the many, since that view leads to the most wonderful recommendation of sophistry. He thus compels Protagoras to accept openly Protagoras's concealed view by showing that its open profession leads to the most profitable consequence. Now of course this is what Protagoras had claimed to do in his very first speech, when he said he is the first who professes to be a sophist because it doesn't pay to conceal it. And Socrates has shown in a long way, which we cannot repeat now, of course, that "You make a fool of yourself, Protagoras, in what you do. That's the way to do it."

After having made the allegedly cautious Protagoras in fact cautious, he forces him now to be truly candid. The candor is that he admits that somehow—he comes to admit that the good is the pleasant in this example. He gives him a lesson in prudence, practical wisdom, *phronēsis*: he shows the alleged teacher of prudence that the alleged teacher of prudence lacks prudence. And that is of course very fatal, as if you would show a teacher of mathematics that he doesn't know what mathematics is. In fact, I believe it is even graver, because a teacher of prudence is by definition a man who cannot get into these kind of fixes. This I believe is the connection. If it was a bit complicated, that is all my fault. And I believe that there may be some minor inexactnesses in it, I have no doubt, but if I would try to avoid that it would still be more complicated; I would have to write this up in a long presentation. But this is, I believe, in many ways a true image of what happens in this dialogue. Yes?

Mr. Dry: Isn't the problem that Hippocrates might not grasp this imprudence on the part of Protagoras because it is sort of underneath?

LS: Mr. Dry, draw on your own experience. You hear a discussion on this campus or elsewhere on the subject of which you know very little, but still in a language which you can follow; it must not be mathematical symbols which you do not know. Wouldn't you see who is licked or not, if it is a matter of victory or defeat?

Mr. Dry: Well, that certainly, but Socrates does come out praising sophistry in what might appear to be . . .

LS: Yes, but the question is: Is Protagoras, that despiser of measurement, the right man to teach the true art of measurement of pleasure? . . . Now one word about the question which is not discussed in this dialogue—[ix] as happily as the tyrant, from the point of view of Plato. Good. And you can see whether this really makes a proof that such an art of measurement exists. But the most important passage regarding our subject is a very brief one in the dialogue *Statesman*, 284e. Will you read?

[viii] That is, 333b–d.

[ix] The tape was changed at this point.

Mr. Reinken:
Clearly we should divide the art of measurement into two on the principle enunciated by dividing it at this point: one section will comprise all arts of measuring number, length, depth, breadth, or velocity of objects by relative standards; the other section comprises arts concerned with due occasion, due time, due performance and all such standards as have removed their abode from the extremes and are now settled about the mean.[x]

LS: Yes, that is enough. In other words, this is a statement made not by Socrates but the Eleatic Stranger; but still, Plato asks us to listen to the Eleatic Stranger too, and he says that there are two arts of measurement. The one is what we call mathematics, but there is another art of measurement which is transmathematical. And why? Because it is not merely concerned with relative length—meaning "this is greater than that," which in actual terms means "this is four miles long and that is one mile," still relative—but with an absolute standard: how a given action (or given whatever it may be) looks if viewed in the light of the proper; of the proper, the right.

Now when Aristotle speaks in his *Ethics* of practical wisdom as the intellectual core of virtue, he speaks of virtue aiming at the right mean. Mean also is a mathematical consideration, of course, whether geometrical or arithmetical doesn't make any difference. But the right mean is here not like the geometric or the arithmetical mean, but the right mean between too much and too little. And Aristotle refers to the fact that if we praise an action, or for that matter also a poem or another statement, the highest praise is: there is nothing too much and nothing too little. These are quantitative terms, but nevertheless, these are not terms of mathematical sciences proper. And I believe that this makes very much sense to me, to say this conforms to what Plato thought about the subject. So if you want, quantitative considerations enter of course in actions, but in a way which mathematics as such is not able to solve, because there comes in a nonmathematical consideration: the right mean. The right mean. Someone wanted to say something. Mr. . . . .

Student: Does Hippias possess both these skills?

LS: No, Hippias is in a way the more ridiculous of the two, which we cannot see from this dialogue: you would have to read the two dialogues on Hippias. No, Hippias was much less pretentious than Protagoras. He was a jack-of-all trades—I mean, he could possess all arts. For example, he showed that every piece of clothing he had on himself was made by him [laughter], and this kind of thing.[xi] And he knew the list of Spartan kings and ephors by heart and this kind of thing,[xii] a man pretending to a kind of omniscience which Protagoras . . . No, I think the highest of these three was Prodicus, and Prodicus's distinction of names, while constantly ridiculed by Socrates here, is not simply rejected by him, only Prodicus seems to have overdone it. But that a certain

[x] Strauss makes a mostly inaudible statement about the translation, which is that of J. B. Skemp, *Statesman* (London: Routledge, 1952).
[xi] See Plato, *Hippias Minor*, 368b–d.
[xii] See Plato, *Hippias Major*, 285d–e.

consideration of the correctness of expression is eminently useful, Socrates of course did not deny.

Now there is one more passage which we should consider in order to understand the last section, also one of which I hadn't thought of before in this connection. And that is very early, in 317a when Protagoras speaks of his peculiarity: the older ones, you remember, they were all sophists, Homer and Hesiod and so on, but they concealed it, and I am the one who comes out in the open. When he criticizes these concealers, what does he say?

Mr. Reinken:
for I do not believe that they effected their purpose. The powerful humans[xiii] in the various cities did not fail to see through their pretense. And as for the many,[xiv] they have no understanding— (317a)

LS: No, "they don't notice anything, so to speak."

Mr. Reinken:
They notice nothing, so to speak.

LS: Yes, that is all we need. Now it seems to me that this principle of Protagoras is underlying his final defeat. This speech leading up to "wisdom is knowledge" and hence "sophistry is *the* salvation of our lives" is based, in the address to the many, on this view: they don't notice nothing. He addresses this to the many. Knowledge is virtue in this sense because the pleasures and so on can be measured, and at the moment you measure pleasure, the appearance doesn't have any power over you, which is very good in different things but not if you are very much attracted by the present pleasure. Now as for what Protagoras says: "Well, you can sell them anything," Socrates replies to that. Socrates does that. He acts on this kind of "quote cynicism" but in a much more clever way than Protagoras himself did. Because everyone, of course, even if he has no capacity to carry with a clever dialectician, knows that this is simply not true, that the power of the present attraction cannot be simply overcome by this kind of calculation. Again, I refer to an example of Rousseau, when he says [that] people say they cannot restrain themselves. And so someone, for example, cannot restrain himself from committing adultery and he enters the bedroom of his beloved at night. Rousseau says: Let us make this simple experiment. Erect gallows beneath this window and make it clear to him that as soon as he has enjoyed himself, he will be hanged. Then he will control himself.[xv] Now this is of course no longer art of measurement but counteracting one sense impression, one image by another image, and one feeling or passion by another passion, which is a different story. Good. But we should go on now and read a bit more because we have reached a very high point, we cannot deny that, but we have now heard Socrates making propaganda for sophistry, and a very clever one. Good.

Mr. Reinken:

[xiii] In the translation: "authorities"
[xiv] In the translation: "the people."
[xv] Rousseau, *Emile; or, On Education*, 494.

Let us suppose this to be our answer to the many humans[xvi]— (358a)

LS: "To the many," that is very clear now. This is what Socrates says to the many or what we, we the intellectuals, say to the many. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:
And now I should like to ask you, Hippias, and you, Prodicus, as well as Protagoras (for the argument is to be yours as well as ours), whether you think that I am speaking the truth or not?
They all thought that what I said was entirely true. (358a)

LS: Yes, "was exceedingly true," "marvelously true." [Laughter] Now here incidentally we have perhaps that common deliberation with the other sophists, you remember, which Socrates quasi-promised to Hippocrates in 314b. Now they agree, of course, with enthusiasm. Did you ever hear, say, a producer of Colgate toothpaste protest against a clever advertisement [5][LS laughs], for that same toothpaste? Good. Yes, go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Then you agree, I said, that the pleasant is the good, and the painful is evil. And here I would beg my friend Prodicus here[xvii]— (358a)

LS: Never. I mean, "friend" occurs very rarely.

Mr. Reinken:
Prodicus here not to introduce his distinction of names, whether he is disposed to say pleasurable, delightful, joyful. However, by whatever name he prefers to call them, I will ask you, most excellent Prodicus, to answer in my sense of the words. Prodicus laughed and assented, as did the others. (358a-b)

LS: Now Prodicus agrees here, although he knows better. You would only have to look up 337c in order to see that Prodicus makes a very sensible distinction between two kinds of pleasure and expresses it by different terms. Now he of course laughs, as we see. There is not much laughing going on in this dialogue, as you must have observed. He sees the whole thing; he laughs not only about Socrates teasing him but because he somehow sees that big joke which Socrates has practiced. And Prodicus[6] enjoys jokes; so does Socrates. But there is one great difference between Socrates's enjoying jokes and Prodicus's, a very obvious one: Socrates doesn't laugh. You have to imagine him with a poker face all the time. He laughed only on his dying day, according to both Plato and Xenophon. And the story in Xenophon is particularly exhilarating because he had a very sentimental adherent, and in his way quite charming, Apollodorus, who was completely out of his mind when he heard that Socrates was going to die. And then he says: How terrible, Socrates, that you are unjustly compelled to death. And then Socrates said, laughingly: Would you prefer that I had been justly condemned to death?[xviii] That is a rare occasion

[xvi] In the translation: "to the world in general."
[xvii] "Here" is added by Mr. Reinken.
[xviii] Xenophon, *Apology of Socrates to the Jury*, 28.

for joking. But here we can say he does not laugh. Yes. Now you see here all accept the equation of the good and the pleasant, even Protagoras does, no doubt about it anymore because if a conclusion—how did Hobbes put it so beautifully?

Student: "If so oft reason is against a man, so oft will a man be against reason."[xix]

LS: Yes, but "so oft unreason is for a man, so oft will a man be for unreason." Yes, that is quite true. Now?

Mr. Reinken:
Then, what do you say to this?[xx]

LS: He says *andres*. That term didn't occur; for the first time, Socrates is speaking no longer to *anthrōpoi*, to mere humans, but to *hombres*. Of course they are *hombres*, *hombres* are outstanding men. And if wisdom is the highest, then the men of wisdom will be the *hombres* par excellence. That is elementary. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Then, gentlemen, what do you say to this? Are not all actions noble of which the tendency is to make life painless and pleasant? And the noble work is also useful and good?
This was admitted.
Then I said, if the pleasant is the good, nobody does anything under the idea or conviction that some other thing would be better and is also attainable, when he might do the better. And this inferiority of a man to himself is merely ignorance, as the true superiority of a man to himself is wisdom.
They all assented. (358b-c)

LS: Yes. Now you see here in Greek that he says first "it seems so." Here it is said it seemed so to all; and in the sequel, if you would look up c6, d4, and 359a1: "All agree." In this single case in d6, the "all" is not added: there must be someone holding out. Now let us see what this can possibly mean. What he says there is: Actions leading to pleasure are identical with noble actions. A very tall order! If someone derives pleasure from something absolutely abominable, no man in his senses would call action leading to that pleasure a noble or praiseworthy action. Of course not. And some man here holds out against it. I bet that Protagoras holds out, because he was the one who said [that] only those who derive pleasure from noble things are truly pleasurable: 351c.

Now the argument here is simply this: The good is the pleasant; actions leading to pleasure, i.e., to the good, are of course useful—because that is what we mean by useful, something good—but they are also noble, praiseworthy, for the noble action is useful as well as good, namely, pleasant. One can only say: What a non sequitur. Only apply it to a case of a bank robbery. They rob the bank in order to have an enjoyable period in Miami

[xix] Thomas Hobbes, *The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic*, edition with preface and critical notes by Ferdinand Tönnies (London: Simpkin, Marshall, & Co., 1889), xv.
[xx] In the translation: "Then, my friends, what do you say to this?"

Beach, or [in] Hawaii or wherever it may be. So pleasure is the good, and the bank robbery is useful to that. If they properly did it, they may not be caught, and that is good. But is it praiseworthy? I think no one would say that. They wouldn't dare, they themselves wouldn't dare to praise it [laughter], which is a clear sign—no, honestly—which is a clear sign that it is not praiseworthy. Good. Now in the next point they all agree because there is no question of the praiseworthy involved and therefore there is no difficulty. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And is not ignorance the having a false opinion and being deceived about important matters?
To this also they unanimously assented.
Then, I said, no man voluntarily pursues evil, or that which he thinks to be evil. To pursue what one believes to be evil rather than what is good is not in human nature; and when a man is compelled to choose one of two evils, no one will choose the greater when he may have the less.
All of them agreed to every word of this. (358c-d)

LS: "All of us agreed." In the former cases, when he said this was acceptable to all, we do not know whether Socrates agreed, but here "all of us." That means Socrates and Protagoras are included. Yes, go on.

Mr. Reinken:
Well, I said, there is a certain thing called fear or terror; and here, Prodicus, I should particularly like to know whether you would agree with me in defining this fear or terror as expectation of evil.
Protagoras and Hippias agreed to this definition, but Prodicus said that this was fear and not terror. (358d-e)

LS: Well, just as the distinction made now between fear and anguish on the basis of Kierkegaard, fear and anguish are two different things. The reason, the principle of the distinction is of course different, but it is easily intelligible that man makes the distinction between two kinds of expectations of evil things. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Never mind, Prodicus, I said; but let me ask whether, if our former assertions are true, a man will pursue that which he fears when it is open to him to pursue what he does not fear? Would not this be in flat contradiction to the admission which has been already made, that he thinks the things which he fears to be evil, and no one will pursue or voluntarily accept that which he thinks to be evil?
That also was universally admitted. (358d-359a)

LS: Yes, but he doesn't include himself now. "No one goes toward things." Here the ambiguity depends entirely on something which I cannot render in English, which in Greek is the preposition *epi,* e-p-i in transliteration. It has a twofold meaning relevant here. I will bring it out by not translating it now: No one goes *epi* things which he knows

or believes to be bad, but what one feels one knows or believes to be bad. No one goes *epi* the terrible or dangerous things. Now the joke is this, that the word *epi* may mean here both "after" and "toward." No one of course goes after the bad things in the sense of striving for them. But quite a few people face them; that is something very different, and this difference is obscured by the use of this particular preposition. It means "after" or "toward." No one goes after dangers, very few people excepted, but quite a few people go toward them for one reason or another, face them. If we take the conclusion literally, we would have to say voluntary courage is impossible—voluntary courage. And whether we can call involuntary courage courage is a question. Yes. It is not clear, as I pointed out, whether Socrates accepts this or not. Let us read a few more lines.

Mr. Reinken:
Then, I said, these, Hippias and Prodicus, are our premises. And I would beg Protagoras to explain to us— (359a)

LS: That is too weak: "to apologize."

Mr. Reinken:
to apologize to us how he can be right in what he said at first. (359a)

LS: Let us stop here. Socrates calls here Protagoras before a tribunal. You see, Protagoras had this terrific triumph, if it was a triumph. Socrates had made the best Madison Avenue statement ever made in favor of sophistry, of Protagoras's big pride. And now comes the anticlimax: now he is called before a tribunal consisting of Socrates, Prodicus, and Hippias; and Prodicus and Hippias at any rate are his competitors. Not a pleasant prospect. Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
To apologize to us how he can be right in what he said at first. I do not mean in what he said quite at first, for his first statement, as you may remember, was that whereas there were five parts of virtue, none of them was like any other of them; each of them had a separate power.[xxi] To this, however, I am not referring, but to the assertion which he afterwards made, that of the five virtues four were nearly akin to each other, but that the fifth, which was courage, differed greatly from the others. (359a-b)

LS: No, "that the one." He doesn't say the "fifth." "That that one differed very greatly from the others, namely, courage."

Mr. Reinken:
And of this he gave me the following proof. He said: You will find, Socrates, that some of the most impious— (359b)

LS: No . . . "and he said that I would realize it by using the following proof."

Mr. Reinken:

[xxi] In the translation: "function."

I would realize by using the following proof: some of the most impious—

LS: No, no, that is literally quoted, what Protagoras said before: "For you will find, Socrates."

Mr. Reinken:
For you will find, Socrates, that some of the most impious, and unrighteous, and self-indulgent, and ignorant men are among the most courageous— (359b)

LS: No, no, that "you will find human beings who are most impious and unjust and incontinent and ignorant"—always in the superlative—"yet most courageous; and through this you will realize that courage differs greatly from the other parts of virtue." Now let us stop here, for I think we cannot go beyond that.

Now you see Socrates when he says here: "What you said first, and I don't mean what you said right at the beginning but only right at the beginning of this section," this is not very nice of Socrates, because he rubs it in that Protagoras has shifted his position. That is not nice. But on the other hand, he acts now as a judge. He tells him: You will be held responsible only [LS laughs] for what you did last, i.e., for what you did after deliberation, also a judicial principle. Now here is again another repetition and a thorough comparison of b2 to 6 with 349d5 to 8 would be a good exercise in learning how to read Plato. The changes are much greater than they were in the case of when Socrates quoted what the human beings say, for the reason indicated. Let me see, I mention only a few points: the positions of impiety and injustice are changed, i.e., impiety and injustice are presented as interchangeable. Yes. Well, I believe that we simply will stop now.

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[1] Deleted "foot"
[2] Deleted "this kind"
[3] Deleted "yes, but"
[4] Deleted "he lives on that."
[5] Deleted "for it."
[6] LS says "Protagoras," evidently in error.

Session 16: May 19, 1965

Courage, Hedonism, and the Refutation of Protagoras (359c–362a)

Leo Strauss: Let us turn to our passage in 359c6. But a few words before we begin to read. Socrates asserts that the good is the pleasant, which is not granted by Protagoras, and to begin with, not even by the humans, *anthrōpoi*. But he forces the humans to grant it, and on this basis shows that the salvation of life consists in becoming a student of the sophists, if not of the Protagorean brand, as we have seen. Protagoras himself believes in his heart of hearts that the good is the pleasant; in other words, that the noble and just are only conventional. We know this from the sister dialogue *Theaetetus*, where the dead Protagoras is resuscitated by Socrates; and since he is dead and can no longer run any risks, he can say it. . . .

Now this passage in the *Theaetetus* is discussed very ably in the book of Jacob Klein which just came out, *A Commentary on Plato's* "*Meno*," North Carolina Press.[i] I regard this as a very outstanding book, and not only as a highpoint in Platonic studies but as a watershed. Klein presents there the section of the *Theaetetus*[ii] in question (unfortunately I forgot [to bring] the book), [where] Socrates imitates Protagoras.[1] And this imitation of Protagoras presents a self-refutation of Protagoras, and therewith, since Protagoras's thesis is that knowledge is sense perception, a self-refutation of sense perception. Incidentally, sense perception and pleasure belong together: knowledge as sense perception is a parallel to the good is the pleasant, the sensually perceived. Now in the *Protagoras,* the living Protagoras ascribes his view to the humans, and he does this from fear. Socrates therefore brings the humans over to Socrates's view, which is in fact Protagoras's concealed view, and thus he induces Protagoras to confess his view, namely, by showing the excellent consequences for Protagoras: sophistry is a necessity. By ascribing what he presents as his view to the humans, Socrates in a way imitates Protagoras. I believe that this point is common to the *Theaetetus* scene and to the *Protagoras* here.

Now Socrates turns—after having brought over the many to his side and after having proved to the many that they can spend their money in no better way than by sending their children to the sophists—he turns then to the sophists, whom he counts not as humans, not *anthrōpoi*, but *andres, hombres*. They are the elite. From what preceded, it follows that no one goes toward the dangerous things because the dangerous things are bad things, of course. And the question arises then: Can there be courageous men if there is not a single man who faces up to or goes after the dangerous things? Socrates calls Protagoras before the tribunal consisting of himself and the two other sophists. He

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[i] Jacob Klein, *A Commentary on Plato's* Meno (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), reprinted by the University of Chicago Press (1998).

[ii] Strauss says *Protagoras*, evidently in error. Consider *Theaetetus* 167c and context as well as session 8, n. x above.

reminds Protagoras of what Protagoras had eventually asserted, namely, that wisdom is different from courage. This was the place where we stopped last time. And now we go to 359b6 and following. We had just read the literal quotation, or almost literal quotation of Protagoras's statement by Socrates.

Mr. Reinken:
[Soc.:] I was surprised at his saying this at the time, and I am still more surprised now—

LS: Now wait a minute. "I was greatly surprised when I heard this reply." Now at that time Socrates of course did not indicate in any way that he was surprised. He is now much more outspoken to Protagoras because the situation is greatly different. At that time amazement wouldn't have helped alone. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and I am still more surprised now that I have discussed the matter with you.

LS: "You" in the plural, i.e., not only Protagoras, but the others too. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
So I asked him whether by the brave he meant the confident. Yes, he replied, and the aggressive. Do you remember, Protagoras, making this answer?[iii]
He assented. (359b-c)

LS: You see here is again a cross-examination. The Greek word for that is *elenchos*, and the famous procedure of Socrates is generally called elenchus, but the original meaning was of course judicial cross-examination, which may include torture. And now here we have a kind of judicial cross-examination because Protagoras was called before the tribunal. But this is again also a quotation, a correct quotation, with minor changes which I cannot go over now. I only wanted to say that concerning the quotation, Socrates omits now that the courageous[iv] go toward what the many fear. In other words, he omits now the difference between the courageous and the cowards. What this means will become clear soon.

Mr. Reinken:
Well, then, I said, tell us against what are the brave ready to go—against the same things as the cowards?
No, he answered." (359c)

LS: You see, Socrates proceeds step by step, the impression of utmost exactness, and in the judicial procedure of the utmost fairness or legality. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:
Then against something different?
Yes, he said.

[iii] In the translation: "(You may remember, Protagoras, that this was your answer.)"
[iv] Strauss says "the many," evidently in error. Compare 349e3 with 359b8–c2.

LS: You see the exactness. The courageous do not go toward the same dangers toward which the cowards go. No, then they go toward something different. There may be something deeper behind it, but on the surface it is of course a hundred percent evident. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Then do cowards go where there is nothing to fear, and the brave where there is much to fear?
Yes, Socrates, so people[v] say. (359c)

LS: Again, "the humans." "So at least the humans say." He tries again to take cover behind the humans as he has done before. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Very true, I said. But I want to know against what do you say the brave are ready to go—against fearful things, believing them to be fearful things, or against things which are not fearful? (359d)

LS: You see, Socrates does no longer permit Protagoras to take this cover. "Protagoras *you* are the defendant here before our tribunal, not the many." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
No, said he: the former case has been proved by you in the previous argument to be impossible. (359d)

LS: He refers here to 358e, where it was said that no one would wish to go or is willing to go toward the things which he fears, i.e., which he regards as evil. Now it is said that of course the courageous do not go toward the fear-inspiring things. The courageous do not go toward the fear-inspiring things even—he omits here "willing[ly]," which means that the courageous do not go toward the fear-inspiring things even under compulsion; for, clearly, if they did it under compulsion, the so-called fearful things, the enemy, would be less fear-inspiring and hence would be relatively good compared with the MP[vi] with his gun behind him in the back. The cowards go toward the fear-inspiring things, if they do, only under compulsion; and therefore it is relatively good, the enemy. That I hope is clear. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
That, again, I replied, is quite true. And if this has been rightly proved, then no one goes to meet what he thinks fearful, since inferiority to oneself has been shown to be ignorance.
He assented. (359d)

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[v] In the translation: "men."
[vi] Military policeman.

LS: Now that is very strange, isn't it? Are there no ignorant people? And therefore, if there are ignorant people, why are there not cowards in particular? Socrates seems to identify many in general with the wise. On what grounds? Do you see the strangeness of this passage? His reasoning here implies that there are no ignorant people. No one goes toward the terrible thing because to do so would be ignorance. Yes?

Student: Well, isn't he saying [that] no one goes to the terrible things knowing that they are terrible?

LS: Yes, but it is not here stated. It is not repeated. Here it is said unqualifiedly.

Same Student: Well, then, when Protagoras said in the former case it was impossible, the former case is going to the terrible things knowing they are terrible.

LS: Still, I think we have to take this sentence by itself also. Precisely because Socrates is so exact, as we have seen before, so pedantic, we have to take his sentence literally. Yes?

Student: Then "no one goes to meet what he regards as dreadful" is a mistranslation then?

LS: No, no. That is correct.

Same Student: Well, then it would seem that—

LS: No, but look at it here. This is said without any qualification. "No one goes toward the fear-inspiring things" is unqualifiedly said. [It is] not qualified by knowledge or ignorance, or by voluntary or involuntary. But I think it will be explained in the sequel. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And yet the brave man and the coward alike go to meet that about which—

LS: More literally, "but all go toward the confidence-inspiring things, both cowards and courageous men." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
All go towards the confidence-inspiring things so that, in this point of view, the cowardly and the brave go to meet the same things. (359d-e)

LS: So in other words, the cowards and the brave or the ignorant and the wise have the same end, i.e., they agree in the most important respect. To take the simple formula, they all want to be happy. Striving toward the good is common to all men and hence presupposed by all teaching. This striving which is presupposed by all teaching is itself not an object of teaching: it's not teachable. We will come back to that later. Yes, but the difficulty, the obvious difficulty, is now raised by Protagoras.

Mr. Reinken:
And yet, Socrates, said Protagoras, that against which the coward goes is the opposite of that against which the brave goes. The one, for example, is willing to go to battle, and the other is not willing. (359e)

LS: Yes. Now Protagoras makes here a commonsense statement against Socrates's absurd assertion. Granted that all men strive for the good, but there is such a great variety of the good things that this overall statement is not very helpful. This variety of the good things, does this ring a bell, as they say? Variety of the goods?

Student: Hobbes had something of that . . .

LS: No, no, here. Yes?

Student: The beginning of Aristotle's *Ethics*.[2]

LS: No, here. Much closer to home.

Student: The variety of virtues.

LS: Well, the big interruption in the *Protagoras*, where Protagoras came up with the variety of the good against Socrates. You remember? That some things are good for human beings, other things are good for oxen, and so on and so on and so on. This is somehow Protagoras's strong point; it is not negligible, of course. The courageous are willing to go to war and the cowards are not, an undeniable fact. He inverts here the order of the courageous and the cowards, a kind of a reminder that they are interchangeable because of the identity of the ultimate end. They both want the good although they disagree as to what the good is. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:
And is going to battle noble or disgraceful? I said.
Noble, he replied. (359e)

LS: It is more subtle: "regarding going to battle as noble or as base?"

Mr. Reinken:
Noble, he replied.
And if noble, then already admitted by us to be good; for all noble actions we have admitted to be good. (359e)

LS: Now the courageous go to war because they regard doing it as noble and hence as good, and hence as in no way fear-inspiring. And the base regard going to war as bad because they regard it as unpleasant, fear-inspiring, bad, base on the basis of this beautiful equation, "the noble equal to the good equal to the pleasant." Yes, this is Socrates, but how does Protagoras react to that?

Mr. Reinken:
That is true; and to that opinion I shall always adhere.

LS: He agrees emphatically, you see, to the equation of the noble and the good, and hence also of the pleasant. This we can say is Protagoras's line in this kind of argument, where he has to speak with a certain responsibility because he wants to angle pupils from self-respecting families. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Rightly so,[vii] I said. But which of the two are they who, as you say, are unwilling to go to war, which is a good and noble thing?
The cowards, he replied.
And what is good and noble, I said, is also pleasant?
It has certainly been acknowledged to be so, he replied.

LS: Yes, "it certainly has been agreed upon" is the more literal translation. So he doesn't go back behind that agreement. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
And do the cowards knowingly refuse to go to the nobler, and pleasanter, and better?
The admission of that, he replied, would belie our former admissions.
But does not— (360a)

LS: Now let us stop here for one moment. The cowards do not wish to go to war, although going to war is noble, good, and hence pleasant. They don't know anything of what is fun! They are completely crazy people; they do not know that it is pleasant and noble. This is the reason why they fear going to war. Now that is a clear error, and errors can be corrected by teaching. That is clear. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
But does not the brave man also go to meet the better, and pleasanter, and nobler?
That must be admitted.
And the brave man has no base fear or base confidence?
True, he replied.
And if not base, then noble?
He admitted this.
And if noble, then good?
Yes.
But the fear and confidence of the coward or foolhardy or madman, on the contrary, are base?
He assented. (360b)

LS: Now let us stop here then. So we see here in passing that courage doesn't mean absence of fear but means the presence of the right fear. In the first book of the *Laws* the distinction is made between fear and sense of shame as a noble fear. The courageous have

[vii] In the translation: "True."

only noble fear and noble confidence, that is to say, according to the identification made, pleasant fear and pleasant confidence, while the cowards and the rash have only base fears and base confidence, i.e., unpleasant fears and unpleasant confidences. Of course we can raise the question: Can confidence ever be unpleasant? That is one of the difficulties. But why does he bring in now the rash and the madmen? The rash surely are also eager to go to war, regard war as noble, and hence as good, and hence as pleasant. But what is the difference? In other words, we have to consider not only the one opposite, the cowards, but we have to consider the other, the foolishly bold. But what is the difference between the courageous and the foolishly bold?

Mr. Reinken: The courageous win their wars, the rash don't.

LS: No, I wish that were as simply true—

Mr. Reinken: I think that the assumption is the specific calculus of the sophists: courage is if there is a way to win, you fight.

LS: Yes. But I believe that it is more simple to consider the following thing: the rash are eager to go into any war, however foolish and unjust, whereas the courageous are confident only in regard to reasonable and just wars. And that would mean that courage is inseparable from wisdom and justice. But even the overbold have fears; even they have fears. Every man has fears. But what do the overbold fear? Think of a bully of the meanest kind, think of someone like Himmler: Does he also have fears?

Student: Fear of disgrace.

LS: Yes. He fears appearing as a non-bully, or something of this kind. Sure, that is true. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:
And these base and evil fears and confidences originate in ignorance and lack of learning?
True, he said.
Then— (360b-c)

LS: So that is clear. That is what is implied in everything that went before. And in the case of bold, courageous, and cowards, the reason for the conduct of the overbold and the cowards is ignorance. The cowards do not know the nobility of death in a just cause; the overbold do not know the baseness of death in an unjust cause. Both cases are similar. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Then as to that because of which cowards are cowards, do you call it cowardice or courage?
I should say cowardice, he replied.
And have they not been shown to be cowards through their ignorance of dangers?

Assuredly, he said.
And because of that ignorance they are cowards?
He assented.
And that because of which they are cowards is admitted by you to be cowardice?
He again assented.
Then the ignorance of what is and is not fearful is cowardice?
He nodded assent. (360c-d)

LS: Now the argument is very simple. That because of which men are cowards is cowardice; that because of which men are cowards proves to be ignorance, ignorance of the fear-inspiring things; hence cowardice is identical with ignorance of the fear-inspiring things, and therefore the opposite, courage, will be knowledge. Yes?

Student: This seems to depend on what we talked about before, that each has only one opposite, and therefore, if there are two opposites to the same thing they have to be the same. And I wonder if the assertion of the overbold was meant to remind that there can be two opposites?

LS: But how would it affect this argument? What makes an overbold man overbold? Overboldness. But it also is ignorance of the things which are truly fear- or confidence-inspiring. Yes?

Mr. Shulsky: Well, but, perhaps in this case the opposites in terms of ignorance and cowardice needn't be the same, because one could be either brave through proper training or something, or brave through knowledge; and knowledge and bravery needn't be the same thing. In other words, ignorance–cowardice would have two different opposites, i.e., two different reasons for being brave, one because of some sort of training, and then the other because of knowledge.

LS: This is here completely disregarded, as you must have seen—the case of the diver or any expert, say, a telephone worker—quite dangerous. This is here disregarded, this case of courage due to expert knowledge.

Mr. Shulsky: I meant more a type of courage which is due not to the knowledge of the dangers but simply because of a certain sort of a training.

LS: This is surely not taken into consideration here in this discussion. This was only used on a former occasion, as you know, and this was in a preparatory manner. There in that case it was knowledge of diving and the things belonging to diving. Now it is a different kind of knowledge, knowledge of the fear-inspiring things as such. Now the diver, the man trained as a diver would be courageous in diving, but he would not be courageous in other matters where he has no expert knowledge. That is why I think the subject is much broader here. Yes?

Student: Could it not be raised as an objection to Plato's argument or Socrates's argument that first of all, it might be that men are born with capabilities . . . and try very hard to be brave—

LS: This is here in a way abstracted from, but not entirely. You have seen that we are compelled to consider the fact that Protagoras only wants pupils who are naturally courageous. . . . But it is here in this argument—in addition, there is another reason: granting that courage is knowledge and it can be acquired by teaching, that doesn't mean that all men can become courageous, because not all men can learn. I mean, there is not a contradiction between them.

Student: Isn't it also possible that man can learn full well—well, this is a variation—no matter how rationally and logically he knows what he should do, how he should go to war, something down below, something in his guts makes his feet go the other way.

LS: Yes, that is a famous difficulty. Socrates's thesis seems to run counter to this commonsense observation. That cannot be if he knows—I mean, the fact that someone opines that it is noble to do it and he doesn't do it overcome by pleasure or fear, that of course he admits. But the opinion is not knowledge, so it is that in the case of the man of knowledge, this cannot happen. We will come back to that later.

Student: But then the Simonides section is in contradiction.

LS: Yes. I know, but we must first follow this argument from where we left off. So we know this much now, that cowardice is identical with ignorance of what is fear-inspiring, c7.

Mr. Reinken:
But surely courage, I said, is opposed to cowardice?
Yes.
Then the wisdom which knows what are and are not fearful things is opposed to the ignorance of them?
To that again he nodded assent.
And the ignorance of them is cowardice.
To that he very reluctantly nodded assent.
And the knowledge of that which is and is not fearful is courage, and is opposed to the ignorance of these things?
At this point he would no longer nod assent, but was silent.
And why, I said, do you neither assent nor dissent, Protagaras? [Laughter]
Finish the argument by yourself, he said. [Laughter] (360d)

LS: So the argument is very simple: the opposite of cowardice is courage, and the opposite of ignorance is knowledge; hence courage is wisdom regarding the fearful things. Implied here is of course one thing which is not made explicit: courage is not identical with wisdom simply but wisdom regarding very specific objects, fear-inspiring things; therefore courage is a part of wisdom as a part of wisdom is a part of virtue, and

courage and virtue have qualitatively different parts—as Protagoras said originally, but with what difference?

Student: Well, it can't be like parts of the face, because the nose is not the face.

LS: Yes, but one other thing I believe is more important at the moment: that the parts are not separable. Virtue has qualitatively different parts. In other words, temperance differs from courage, but they are inseparable. That's the point. This, by the way, is this thesis of Aristotle's *Ethics,* this very commonsensical work compared with Plato. There too the parts of virtue are inseparable; they are qualitatively different but inseparable. That is also here. Yes?

Student: When you say that virtue has qualitatively different parts, do you mean to refer as well to the fact that since courage is only a part of wisdom, that implies the subordination of courage to wisdom—

LS: No, not necessarily. Wisdom branches out into various parts. Whether there should be a wisdom simply, different from the wisdom regarding pleasant and unpleasant things, i.e., temperance, or wisdom regarding future evils, i.e., courage, that is a long question. The dialogue doesn't go up so far.

Same Student: It seems there are two alternatives. Either on the one hand wisdom really is superior, the superior part of virtue, or on the other hand there is really no such thing as virtue, there are only the other four virtues.

LS: Prior to investigation, we cannot answer that. Yes. Mr. . . .?

Student: If they, [the virtues], are inseparable, that means that a drunk can't be courageous. Is that what it means?

LS: Well, a habitual drunkard—I mean, the drunk man, that may be a momentary lapse. It may not even be a lapse; it may be voluntarily induced on a festive occasion, then it is not—

Same Student: No, I mean a heavy drinker who is always—

LS: Yes, surely, his intemperance cannot be courageous, that's true. That is implied.

Student: Well, I don't know very much about our American Civil War, but there is always a conscious rumor in the locker rooms about how Ulysses Grant was a very heavy drinker. . . .

LS: Yes, I know that.

Same Student: How do you want to answer?

LS: But still, a man who drinks very much is not for this reason necessarily intemperate. He may just drink what he can digest. [Laughter] Aristotle discusses that: what is moderate food for a boxer may be much too much for some professor. Yes? [Laughter]

Same Student: Let me try another example, then. How about Sydney Carton in *Tale of Two Cities*,[viii] who often was found on the floor of his apartment having imbibed a plentiful of drink and yet sacrificed his life in the end, saying immortal words, "It is a far far better thing I do."

Mr. Reinken: Then he went sober. [Laughter]

LS: There is a simple answer, which may not satisfy you, [that] there is an infinite variety of *so-called* virtues. I mean, what we ordinarily call a temperate man, he doesn't have to be truly temperate. For example, if he abstains from unhealthy food, he may just be a calculating valetudinarian and he may not be a virtuous man. Let us first finish this argument.

Mr. Reinken:
I only want to ask one more question, I said. I want to know whether you still think that there are men who are— (360e)

LS: "Some humans."

Mr. Reinken:
that there are some humans who are most ignorant and yet most courageous?
It is contentious of you, Socrates, to make me answer. Very well then, I will gratify you, and say that this appears to me to be impossible consistently with the argument. (360e)

LS: No, no, "on the basis of the things agreed upon," I mean, "on the basis of what was agreed upon, it cannot be," but whether we wisely agreed or not is totally different matter. Originally Protagoras had said that there are *many* men who are extremely courageous and extremely stupid or ignorant and extremely unjust and so on. And then "many humans" was replaced merely by "humans," and finally only by "some humans"; that would be an exceptional case, anyway. In fact, it follows that not a single human being is both very foolish and very brave. That is clear.

Now this defeat of Protagoras which we have witnessed—you know, that he became ever more silent—surpasses all his earlier defeats. In the first debate, when the four virtues were discussed there was no clear refutation of his thesis. He was licked in the discussion regarding Simonides, but the relevance of the Simonides section was dismissed by Socrates himself, you know: One cannot find out what poets mean. Here the refutation is inescapable for Protagoras because its major premise, so to speak, is the goodness of sophistry. [3]He cannot object to that. Provided sophistry is good, i.e., men can be made good by teaching, as he claims, then virtue must be teachable, and then the virtues must be knowledge. Socrates has conquered the last holdout of Protagoras. That is the peak.

[viii] Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859).

The result: one must be wise in order to be brave. This is of course also a condemnation of poor Hippocrates, because he isn't wise. He himself doesn't say that [that he is]. Protagoras is unable to defend himself, as we have seen. He will be condemned by the court which consists of his superiors. We have a clear case here of the rule of the best, but the three-man court only disguises the rule of a single man, of the king. Who is that?

Student: Socrates.

LS: Socrates. So we have here a beautiful example of what the rule of the philosopher-king means. We observe an amazing progress from the litigation scene, where Socrates still had to fight for his right to equality with Protagoras, to the final scene, in which he rules supreme. And now an anticlimax: the victor, the king disqualifies himself, i.e., he admits that he is unfit to be a king because he lacks the required knowledge. This is what happens in the sequel to which we must now turn.

Mr. Reinken:
My only object, I said, in continuing with my questions has been the desire to ascertain facts about virtue and what virtue itself is. (360e)

LS: Yes. Now that is the standard formula: What then it is, virtue: *Ti pote esti auto.* Protagoras then had just accused Socrates of the desire to win a victory. Socrates says that his only desire is to find out what virtue is. This was the question implicitly raised in the form of the question: In what sense are the virtues part of virtue? But this is of course not identical with the question of what virtue is. The question of what virtue is was not explicitly raised in this dialogue. Why? Because in the conversation with Protagoras, the desire to find out what virtue is was, to say the least, not Socrates's only desire, because if it had been his only desire, he would have raised it. What was his desire in that discussion? It was not to win a victory, it was not to find out what virtue is, but?

Student: To cure Hippocrates of an unhealthy appetite.

LS: Absolutely. Yes, very good. That is clear. So we must never forget that. Nevertheless, in spite of this eminently practical purpose of the discussion, the gravest theoretical and universal questions were implied. And this is perhaps the healthiest forum to raise the universal questions. Now?

Mr. Reinken:
For if this were clear—

LS: "If this had become clear."

Mr. Reinken:
For if this had become clear, I am very sure that the other controversy which has been carried on at great length by both of us—you affirming and I denying that virtue can be taught—would also become clear. (361a)

LS: Yes. In other words, they discuss whether virtue is teachable without knowing what virtue is; they are completely in the dark. There is a very clear and striking parallel to that at the end of the first book of the *Republic*, where Socrates has proved that justice is good without having raised the question what justice is. How can you say that justice is good if you do not know what justice is? [It is the] same here: how can you know that virtue is teachable if you do not know what virtue is. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
The result of our discussion appears to me to be singular. For if the argument had a human voice, that voice would be heard laughing at us and charging us: "Socrates and Protagoras— " (361a)

LS: Now let us stop here for a moment. With slight exaggeration, we might say that the *logos*, the discussion, the argument is here personified, i.e., anthropomorphized. The *logos* is in a sense a living being; it has in a way a life of its own. Well, we all know that, that an argument has a life of its own; whether we like it or not, it goes on. But nevertheless, it is not strictly speaking a living being: a *logos* cannot talk, it has no voice. Socrates shows now by deed in the sequel how little eager he is to win. He acknowledges spontaneously, generously, that he too is defeated. And that is what the *logos*, or quasi-*logos*, says in the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:
[Socrates and Protagoras], you are strange beings; there are you, Socrates, who was saying earlier that virtue cannot be taught, contradicting yourself now by your attempt to prove that all things are knowledge, including justice, and moderation,[ix] and courage—which tends to show that virtue can certainly be taught; for if virtue were other than knowledge, as Protagoras attempted to prove, then clearly virtue cannot be taught; but if virtue is entirely knowledge, as you are seeking to show, Socrates, then I cannot but suppose that virtue is capable of being taught.— (361a-b)

LS: Now what is the self-contradiction of Socrates which Socrates himself points out? No one else did. Socrates says on the one hand that virtue is knowledge, and on the other [that] virtue is not teachable. Now he had said that it is not teachable. Protagoras had said that it is teachable, but Protagoras did not know what virtue is. Eventually Socrates showed that virtue is teachable *if* the good is identical with the pleasant. By denying still at the end that virtue is teachable, he denies in effect that equation with which he started, namely, of the good and the pleasant; or at any rate, he denies that there is an art of measuring the pleasures or pains, an art which is identical with virtue. If such a measuring art which is identical with virtue existed, Socrates could not still maintain that virtue is not teachable. When he mentions the various virtues here—justice, moderation, and courage—he omits one of the virtues originally mentioned, which is what?

Student: Piety.

[ix] In the translation: "self-control."

LS: Piety. Why? Well, the status of piety is particularly complicated. The answer could not be given except by studying the *Euthyphro*, the subject of which is piety. Yes, now he turns to Protagoras's self-contradiction.

Mr. Reinken:
Protagoras, on the other hand, who hypothesized that it could be taught, is now eager to prove it to be anything rather than knowledge; and if this is true, it must be quite incapable of being taught. (361b)

LS: Now Socrates takes it for granted by this whole statement which he attributes to the *logos* that the argument, the discussion, the dialogue did not bring about the slightest change in Protagoras. Protagoras still believes what he did in the beginning, just as it did not bring about the slightest change in Socrates. They take exactly the same stance now as they did at the beginning. If the purpose was that Socrates should learn something or that Protagoras should learn something, the dialogue is a complete failure. But we know that the primary purpose of the dialogue was neither, but was to have an effect on Hippocrates. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
Now I, Protagoras, perceiving this terrible confusion have a great desire that it should be cleared up. And I should like to carry on the discussion until we finally ascertain what virtue is—

LS: Yes, this is a famous question: What is? *The* Socratic question "What is?," which fully developed means to find out the essential character of virtue, the idea of virtue. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
and to investigate whether it is capable of being taught or not—

LS: The practical conclusion then is this. We must now face *the* question: What is virtue itself? After this question has been answered, then we shall turn to the question whether it is teachable. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:
lest haply Epimetheus should trip us up and deceive us in the argument, as he forgot us in the myth. Even if you were telling the myth,[x] I prefer— (361c-d)

LS: Now wait here for a moment. "Otherwise, if we do not raise the question what is virtue first, we shall act like Epimetheus in the myth," which means we shall act thoughtlessly. Epimetheus forgot the human beings and distributed all the powers among the irrational animals. We shall act thoughtlessly, we shall not consider in the first place what is most important, for the most important question is what virtue is, not whether it is teachable. But we can, of course, raise this question: Does not Socrates know that virtue is knowledge? What about that? We leave this open for the time being. Yes?

[x] In the translation: "story."

Mr. Reinken:
Even as you were telling the myth, I preferred your Prometheus to your Epimetheus, for of him I make constant use, whenever I am busy about these questions, in Promethean care of my own life in its entirety. And if you have no objection, as I said at first, I should like to have your help in the enquiry. (361d)

LS: Yes. Now Socrates will imitate Prometheus, the man of forethought who will consider the most important things first, thinking ahead with a view to his whole life. He does not believe, apparently, that Protagoras will do that. And needless to say, there is complete silence here about Hippocrates, that almost goes without saying. Now the true dialogue will begin, and let us see what happens next.

Mr. Reinken:
Protagoras replied: Socrates, I am not of a base nature, and I am the last human[xi] in the world to be envious— (361d-e)

LS: He omits something: "I praise your zeal and the way in which you argue."

Mr. Reinken: That is the next sentence.

LS: I see. He alters the order. He evidently has a better sense of what comes first than the author.

Mr. Reinken:
I cannot but applaud your energy and your conduct of an argument. (361d-e)

LS: "Energy" comes from an entirely different word. "Zeal" would be a simpler translation. No, ["energy"], that comes from modern physics—indirectly from Aristotle but there [4][he means something] very different.

Mr. Reinken:
As I have often said, I admire you above all the men I meet, and far above all men of your age; and I dare say that I would not be surprised if you were to become one of those who are distinguished for their wisdom. Let us come back to the subject at some future time of your choice; at present we had better turn to something else. [Laughter] (361e)

LS: Well, I think that we can summarize this by saying Protagoras surely had enough for today, yes? So we won't find out what virtue is here.

Mr. Reinken:
By all means, I said, if that is your wish; for I too ought long since to have kept the engagement of which I spoke before, and only tarried because I could not refuse the request of the noble Callias. (362a)

[xi] In the translation: "man."

LS: "Noble" or "beautiful," that is the same. But in order to oblige Callias, Socrates politely agrees. He too is busy. Now how busy Socrates is, we know from the very beginning of the dialogue. He spends the next five or six hours, whatever it was, in retelling this story. And of course Socrates did not stay in order to gratify Callias. So I hate to say this, but he ends with two lies. And the last sentence?

Mr. Reinken:
So the conversation ended, and we went our way. (362a)

LS: Literally, "having said and heard this, we left." So obviously Hippocrates leaves with Socrates, but with a great difference. Hippocrates is busy. There may be another runaway slave. And they separate. At the beginning of the dialogue, as we have seen, there is no Hippocrates there. How can we prove that Hippocrates wasn't there at the beginning of the dialogue, that he wasn't there?

Mr. Reinken: Well, the companion speaks to him in the singular.

LS: Yes, but still there could be a young boy there, and you know sometimes grown-up people are very impolite to young people, unfortunately.

Student: . . .

LS: Yes, he could not have told the entire story in the presence of Hippocrates, that is clear. So I think the end is not difficult to understand.

Now there is one general point which I would like to bring up today, a great difficulty here. Socrates asserts, as we have seen and as we have heard from his own mouth, [that] virtue is knowledge. Well, no assertion of Socrates is more famous than that. But this is a riddle; it is not what we understand by an answer. But here he says also: it is not teachable. Now this comes up in a very clear way in the *Meno*, in 82a.—[xii] not teachable, what is it? And the answer is recollection. But this is also a riddle, but perhaps it points at least in the right direction. I will say a few words about that.

Now knowledge and wisdom are here used synonymously. Socrates does not mean, of course, the knowledge which a shoemaker has, or a physician has, or a mathematician has: this is not the knowledge he has in mind, because we know that these partial knowledges go well together with all kinds of vices. I think we can say that without any hesitation. So knowledge is wisdom. Why is it not teachable? Again, the most general answer is given by Socrates: No man is wise, only god is wise. Even here in the *Protagoras* in the Simonides poem discussion this comes up. Now since no one possesses the knowledge required, no one can transmit it, no one can teach it. What is the consequence of that, that no one possesses the only knowledge which deserves our ultimate respect? What follows from that, if no one has it?

Student: No one is virtuous.

[xii] The tape was changed at this point.

LS: Simply virtuous. Yes, no one can be simply virtuous, that is correct. And that is indicated—I advised you to read the last sentence of the *Phaedo*, as Plato[xiii] says "the best and so on of his contemporaries." And what follows is that one must strive for wisdom. Now striving for wisdom[5], expressed in Greek, means "philosophize": the striving to be wise, *philosophein*. Now if this is so, if the highest of which man is capable is philosophizing, striving for wisdom, can this striving be taught? How can one teach striving? How can one arouse a desire? Think: surely by speeches, among other things. I mean, there would not be this enormous activity on Madison Avenue if one couldn't arouse desires by speeches. But is arousing a desire teaching? In the case of Madison Avenue everyone would admit that this is not teaching, but even in the highest case. Differently stated, our primary state, the state in which all of us are most of the time, in which most of us are all of the time, is from the highest point of view one of being asleep, but not without dreams: we are filled with opinions. That is our state. We need being awakened, namely, awakened to the fact that many of these things are just unsupported opinions. Again, I ask the same question as before: Is awakening a man teaching him? [That is] surely not what we ordinarily understand by teaching. At any rate, men can acquire wisdom only through striving for wisdom, because if he doesn't acquire it, it will never be truly his own.

Now there is another point here to be considered, namely, the obstacles to philosophy. According to the presentation that Socrates gives, for example, in the *Republic*, these obstacles are overwhelmed. Let us read here a passage from the *Republic*, sixth book, 496b to c. Well, let's read here.

Mr. Reinken:
There is a very small remnant then, Adeimantus, I said—

LS: It's almost the biblical expression.

Mr. Reinken:
of those who consort worthily with philosophy. Some, well-born and well-bred nature it may be, held in check by exile and so in the absence of corruptors remaining true to philosophy, as its quality bids, or it maybe happens that a great soul born in a little town scorns and disregards its parochial affairs; and a small group perhaps might by natural affinity be drawn to it from the other arts which they justly disdain; and the bridle of our companion Theages also might operate as a restraint. For in the case of Theages all of the conditions were at hand for his backsliding from philosophy, but his sickly habit of body keeping him out of politics, holds him back. My own case, the divine sign, is hardly worth mentioning—for I suppose that it has happened to few or none before me. (*Republic* 496b-c)[xiv]

[xiii] Strauss says "Socrates," evidently in error.
[xiv] Mr. Reinken reads from the Loeb Classical Library edition, translated by Paul Shorey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935).

LS: Now here we have seen how these obstacles to philosophy are overcome. None of these obstacles was overcome by teaching, but by something else: by Socrates's *daimonion*, this demonic thing, that is not teaching; Theages's illness is not teaching; and other kinds of fate which seem to be important. One can enlarge this, perhaps, and say: by things happening to men without their intending it, bad luck or good luck. And of course the bad luck would be blessings in disguise in this case, but still something which we men do not cause for ourselves. And what Socrates says here is not sufficient for Socrates here and in other passages. These things may lead in given cases to a kind of conversion, and this conversion can be brought about or can be facilitated by an appeal. These are all not strictly speaking teachings. There is a Platonic dialogue called *Theages*; it is today regarded as spurious, I think, at least by everyone except Mr. Benardete and myself. And Benardete's master's thesis must be available in the Committee on Social Thought, where he wrote it, and it is worth reading, I think.[xv]

Now here [in the *Theages*] you have a young man like Hippocrates, but he is different. He comes from upstate, in the first place, meaning from the rural part of the country, not from the city itself. And he is eager to learn the tyrannical art, which is of course fundamentally what Hippocrates also wants to learn, only he is not given the opportunity to spell out completely what he wants to be. He says only that he wants to be famous in the city. But how famous, that we do not know. And Socrates declined that, and not going into the question of whether he is a teacher of the tyrannical art or not, he has two excuses. The first is that he accepts as his companions only—that depends on *eros*, whether some feeling exists in him which he cannot arbitrarily produce and which can surely not be produced by payment of money. And Theages and his father, this rascal, think that this is an absolutely preposterous thing, that an old man with a beard should regard himself as an erotician. And Socrates then has to give another explanation which will make an impression, and then he speaks of his *daimonion*, his demonic gift, and tells them absolutely terrible stories—how do you call these kind of stories which make people shudder?

Student: Horror stories.

LS: Horror stories about what has happened to people who have not listened to his *daimonion*. [Laughter] And the subtlety of the dialogue is that what Socrates means by *eros* and what he means by the *daimonion* are fundamentally the same. Socrates is a man unique (or almost unique) by his natural desire for philosophy and so on. I cannot go into this. But if these elements which have nothing to do with teaching and which cannot be brought about by teaching, does this not make philosophy utterly subjective? We hear of that very much today, and certain motives of some so-called existentialist philsophers remind of course of Plato. But Plato was very far from being an existentialist.

Now where does the reasoning here come in? Reasoning. It is always not too difficult to show the necessity of philosophy, meaning to show that people make assumptions which are not clear and not necessary. Maybe we make some assumptions which are not clear

[xv] Seth Benardete, "The Daimonion of Socrates: A Study of Plato's *Theages*" (master's thesis, University of Chicago, 1953).

but which are necessary, for example, that there are human beings. This is very difficult. How do we know of human beings as human beings? There are all kinds of questions. But without these assumptions we cannot even begin to think. That, I would say, is a necessary assumption. And also that there are things: we cannot sensibly question that. But there are perhaps also assumptions which we make which are neither clear nor necessary. To take a simple example with which some of you are quite familiar: the fact-value distinction, which plays such a great role in present-day social science, is a distinction which is neither clear nor necessary. In other words, it is always not too difficult to show that what people claim to know they do not know. This is a rational thing. But this does not induce people to become *concerned* with knowing; this it cannot bring about. There are always great premiums on accepted opinions—not necessarily in terms of money, maybe in other ways—which prevent it, and nothing can be done about it. Nothing whatever can be done about that. This was the situation in Plato's time, and this is the situation at all times, and no progress of science has changed that.

Now virtue is knowledge: this means for practical purposes that the virtue possible for a man is not separable from philosophizing. That is, I think, the view which goes through all Platonic dialogues. And philosophizing in its turn requires the particular nature, particular natural gifts which include a particular *eros*, which we can state without this somewhat obnoxious term, too obnoxious for people today: an unquenchable desire for clarity, the greatest possible clarity, and the greatest possible unwillingness to beat around the bush or to evade issues. And we know that this is not very frequent in the human race . . . And in modern times there is this particular complication, that what was in former times not of great social power, the existence of, say, mathematics, is now a terrific thing on which the whole society in a sense is based: modern science, which by itself doesn't have the slightest motive to raise philosophic questions and which fosters the habit of reducing philosophy to a concern with understanding or rather with clarifying in scientific terms what science is. This is the maximum we can expect there. All questions of concern to man are lost this way, as you know. So I believe we can recognize what Socrates means when he says [that] virtue is knowledge, this enigmatic saying, as enigmatic as any saying of an oracle and yet different from any oracular sayings because we can see that it makes some sense.

Now there is of course another question, a grave question which is very important here in the *Protagoras*, and as a matter of fact everywhere in Plato. If this is so, which we cannot accept without further ado, that the only true virtue is that which accompanies philosophizing or which follows from philosophizing, what about the virtue of the nonphilosophers, after all the largest number of human beings at all times? That is a grave question. Now Plato has a term for that, a harsh term: vulgar virtue or (which sounds less harsh) political virtue, political virtue meaning here the virtue of the citizen. This is not genuine virtue according to Plato. Let us never forget that the term "moral virtue" never occurs in Plato. That is a coinage of Aristotle. And one must be reasonable: what we mean by moral virtue, what we mean by moral consciousness, is of course not a product of Aristotle in any way. But it is not unimportant that the term was coined so late; and of course since that time, it was never forgotten. And we, in our thinking about these matters, are of course inevitably, prior to reflection, victims of our tradition, and this

tradition is primarily naturally the modern tradition. When we speak of the moral consciousness, i.e., that we imply somehow that what can be expected of every human being—of every human being—is some simple decency. And we can elaborate that and give specimens of it: not cheating and so on; needless to say, not murdering. We can do that very easily. But did men in former times have this notion of simple decency? In a way, of course! But how consciously, how clearly? How does the prophet Micah say? "God has told you, man, what you should do: act justly, love mercy,[xvi] and walk humbly before the Lord."[xvii] Now in our notion of simple decency, the last point is not included, obviously not, i.e., when we speak of ordinary decency, we do not count piety as an essential part or element of decency. That is very important. Where do we find that, ever? I read a statement some time ago by a very good ancient historian about some late Roman writers who praise moral virtue as the only thing which counts. I put the question somewhat more pointedly to him, and he never replied to me; and then I happened to meet him somewhere, and he said: Well, it wasn't there. And that was the reason why he hadn't replied to me. That is very rare. I mean, this thing which grew up in the Enlightenment, modern enlightenment very clearly, and was most clearly formulated by Kant: that which gives worth to any man is his good will, as Kant called it, his sense of duty—we can say his decency—and this does not itself include anything of religion. Indirectly, yes, but not in itself.

When you look at the statements of the ancient Stoics, famous for their rigorous moralism—[6]I mean, simply take Cicero, you don't have to make very learned studies of that: What are these virtues? Of course prudence is one of them; and when we ordinarily speak of decency we do not today think of prudence. The modern sentimentality has taken care of that: it is the heart and not the mind. But prudence here means much more: it means theoretical knowledge, so that from the Stoics' point of view such things as logic and physics are virtues, meaning part of that overall virtue by which a man is a good man. It is very hard to find that in former times, a man who would say human goodness consists in morality, i.e., in proper conduct toward other human beings, period. I mean, I wait for the man who will show me that passage. It may be there. But it grew up in the Enlightenment, in the context of the antitheological implications of the Enlightenment, and is today of the modern things probably the most respectable part of our modern tradition, because today people don't even require this thesis . . . So I thought that this excursis, which I didn't plan, is necessary to get clearer answers to the questions.

So the question with which we are concerned is, to repeat: What about the virtues of the nonphilosophers? When one makes such an atrocious statement as Socrates makes by saying [that] virtue is knowledge—which means in effect the only thing which is respectable on earth is philosophizing and its concomitants, that is clear for Socrates: a man who philosophizes cannot be a fake, he cannot be a charlatan, he cannot be competitive, he cannot be in any way vicious. That is out of the question. But what about the large majority of mankind? Now their possible virtue is called by Plato, as I said, vulgar or political virtue. Now Plato does not understand by political virtue the same as Protagoras does, because Protagoras, as we have seen, understands political virtue in a

[xvi] Students contribute to the formulation of the quotation here.
[xvii] Micah 6:8.

very narrow sense, from which courage, for example, is excluded; whereas Plato admits as a matter of course that there is a political courage as distinguished from true courage. At any rate, the key point, and this is what is then taken up by Aristotle on a very large scale: the basis of this nonphilosophic virtue is habituation. You get it by being told as a child, as Protagoras described it quite nicely: Do this, don't do that. And if you do what you are told not to do, you are spanked: that is of course part of the habituation . . . And this clearly consists of parts. A child may be temperate—or a grown-up human being, for that matter—and not courageous. We all know that. We see that time and again; men who are very cowardly and very honest. We find no difficulty in saying that. So virtue consists of parts. And we admit that the parts are separable, as is shown by the example. An indication of this state of affairs we find even in Plato's *Republic*. I mentioned this on a former occasion: the lowest class of men possess[es] justice and moderation, but not courage. You remember that?

Now it would be of great interest to raise this question in order to get a full picture, within the limits of the possible now: How does Socrates's virtue look in the light of the commonsense notion of virtue? I occasionally referred to a passage in Xenophon's *Hiero*, in which Hiero, the tyrant of Syracuse, makes a distinction between three kinds of men: the brave, the just, and the wise. The tyrant fears the brave because they might make a rebellion. He fears the just because they might be desired as rulers by the multitude, so that the just man wouldn't make a rebellion, he would not go in for irregular action; but [7][the just men] would be naturally desired by [the multitude] and therefore are competitors for the title. And he, [the tyrant], fears also the wise men, who are a third group (category, as we say today), different from the brave and the just. The wise he fears because they might contrive something, figure out something, those shrewd, cunning fellows.[xviii] And now if we apply this simple statement to Socrates: What did he do when he was subject to tyrants? Well, he surely didn't make revolts; he surely was not desired as a ruler by the multitude; he contrived more or less to survive and not to get mixed up in the horrible crimes in which the tyrants tried to get rid of him.

Now what do we learn about this question of Socrates's virtue? Now we turn it around, as it were, looking not at the many in the light of the Socratic notion of virtue, but turn it around [and] looking at Socrates in the light of the commonsensical view of virtue. I believe that we discussed the litigation scene, and we got an inkling when Socrates proceeds unjustly yet from justice. Needless to say, the final two lies are also interesting. Of course no one except the pedant would say Socrates is a liar because he said these things, but still it is quite remarkable that he can so easily lie. [LS laughs] Now the Simonides scene, I believe, is the key passage as far as this question is concerned; and someone referred to it in the previous discussion, that here it is shown, in agreement with Socrates's view, that no man is wise. It is shown that no man's virtue or goodness is uninterrupted. Yes? There can be all kinds of things which bring him down, all kinds of misfortunes. The wise man is compelled in certain circumstances to act unwisely or the

[xviii] Xenophon, *Hiero*, 5.1–2. See Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny*, corrected and expanded edition, including the Strauss–Kojève correspondence, ed. Victor Gourevitch and Michael S. Roth (New York: Free Press, 2013), 12. The volume includes a translation of *Hiero* by Seth Benardete.

just man is compelled to act unjustly. Goodness depends, therefore, on being loved by the gods or on not being conquered by chance.

Now there is only one example given of a wise man who acts badly or unjustly under compulsion, and that is Simonides himself: being a subject of tyrants, of people whom he regards as unjust and otherwise defective; and yet he didn't keep his mouth shut only, but he praised them. This is quite a difference. From our age, we know examples, for example, from Germany. People who refrained from blaming Hitler by being subject to Hitler is one thing, but the people who praised Hitler, which they were not compelled to do, that is another story. And Simonides did this kind of thing, an act which is unjust and cowardly, but prudent. So this would imply that prudence is something different from courage and justice, as was implied in the passage of the *Hiero* to which I referred: we can say injustice motivated by fear of tyrants. And we must always understand, in reading Plato or Xenophon, the multitude as such is such a tyrant—at least potentially, unless it is severely limited by constitutional limitations; then it is much better.

This is one thing, but look at the explanation which Socrates gives of his conduct in the *Gorgias*. He says: If I am accused by the city, how can I defend myself? I am in the position of a physician who is accused by a cook before a tribunal of children. I never gave you candies, and I always gave you bitter pills and cut you and so on and so on. So he could not possibly tell them the truth, because they wouldn't understand it. Here there is no cowardice involved. And we know also of his refusal to escape from prison, to say nothing of his conduct in war. So here we have another example where someone refrains from speaking, conceals what he thinks not from fear but because there was no alternative to it: it would be a wholly absurd action to try to explain. So then the question of courage doesn't arise here, one could say. Accordingly, Xenophon, in his two lists of Socratic virtues, does not mention courage, but this does not mean that Socrates was a coward, but that courage doesn't apply to him. Socrates went to war and was a good soldier. Which virtue did he practice in going to war? Not courage.

Student: Justice.

LS: Justice. Now what does justice mean here? Was he sure that these were just and wise actions, the Peloponnesian War, the battle of Delium, or whatever?

Student: The city protects or allows you . . .

LS: Yes, but, more simply and directly.

Student: It is courage to conquer . . .

LS: No. What happens in war?

Student: . . .

LS: What happens in war? How come that A is sent to a campaign and B is not sent?

Student: . . .

LS: I mean, disregarding now dishonest actions, there are laws which determine who is to go to war and who is not; even if you use the lot, the lot is still the legal instrument. So justice means here law-abidingness. Socrates was law-abiding even if it cost his life. Very well, that is good enough, but then we have to raise the question: Was Socrates unqualifiedly law-abiding? We have it from his own mouth in the *Apology of Socrates*, where he asks himself: What [8]if the Athenians make a compromise proposal: you stop philosophizing and we let you go? In other words, we make it a law [that] philosophizing is strictly forbidden and a capital crime. And Socrates says: No, I would not obey that law. So disregarding other cases, but this is the most important case, Socrates is not unqualifiedly law-abiding, rightly, because no man in his senses can swear that he can obey any possible law which may be enacted. That is impossible. And this is not identical with anarchism, or with Thoreau, for that matter, but I think that is truly simple common sense. Everyone, I believe, can imagine laws which he would not obey, and so law-abidingness won't do. And therefore we are—we first said: Let us make a distinction between justice and law-abidingness. All right, then we have to take some further steps, which we cannot possibly take now, on better grounds I hope than those on which Protagoras said: "Now we have to turn to something else." [Laughter].

So let us meet next Monday for some coaching, if this is the proper term [laughter], and also perhaps to try to bring the various threads, some of the threads which have not been brought together, or at least not for a long time . . .

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[1] Changed from "that there Socrates imitates Protagoras."
[2] Deleted "LS: Pardon? Student: The beginning of Aristotle's Ethics."
[3] Deleted "I mean."
[4] Deleted "it is"
[5] Deleted "it means."
[6] Deleted "but if you look at the Stoics' statements"
[7] Deleted "they"
[8] Deleted "about"

Session 17: May 24, 1965

Summary and Conclusion: Rhetoric and Sophistry

Leo Strauss: First a practical problem: the exam subject. Will you take it down, those of you who plan to undergo the treatment? Quote: Socrates's critique of Protagoras's political science. Unquote. Now as a background for this subject, which does not necessarily mean that you should speak about it but which should somehow be present to your mind, I remind you of a broader question: In what way does the critique of the sophists by Plato and Aristotle lay the foundation for classical political philosophy? So that you do not think [that] you deal with only a very little question regarding one minor dialogue, this broad question is in order. Also, as a piece of background I begin my coherent exposition, by which I intend not merely to coach you for the examination but rather to sum up what we are doing.

In the *Protagoras* we find one of the first references to political science, *politikē technē*, which can also mean political art, i.e., that every political scientist must have a certain interest in the first occurrence of the notion of our science, however much it may have changed its meaning. It is true [that] the term—that is perhaps even exaggerating its importance—the term is used not by Protagoras but by Socrates in order to describe not Socrates's own pursuit but the pursuit of Protagoras, the most celebrated sophist. Now this in itself is not particularly surprising because, if I am not mistaken, you will find in every textbook now the view that political science, in whatever way it may be understood, is of sophistic origin. The simple schema: the great philosophers prior to Socrates dealt with the cosmos, and then there came in this time of disintegration, there came up these nasty fellows, the sophists, and they dealt in their way, in a very inept way—well, there are people today who say in a very good way; there is a book by a man called Havelock, *The Liberal*—how is it called?

Student: *The Liberal Temper in Greek Politics*.[i]

LS: "Temper," that is a very good word, because it reminds you of distemper. But it is the *Liberal Temper of Greek Politics* in which he makes the most of this, and he thinks they are practically identical with present-day behavioralists with a pragmatist bent. Good. At any rate, it is a very common view that political science is of sophistic origin. Therefore one must raise this question: What is the character of the sophistic political art? And why is it regarded as radically insufficient and defective by Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and all their great followers? The most accessible remark you find, a most simple and straightforward remark you find near the end of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, where he says [that] the sophists reduced or almost reduced political science to

[i] Eric Havelock, *The Liberal Temper in Greek Politics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957). See Strauss's review, "The Liberalism of Classical Political Philosophy," *Review of Metaphysics* 12 (1959), 390–439; reprinted in *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 26–64.

rhetoric.[ii] And that is, in other words, that is wholly inadequate. The most important and the most striking parallel to the passage at the end of the *Ethics* I found in Xenophon's *Anabasis*, the account of his great exploit in Asia, toward the end of the second book. There he speaks of a man who was a pupil of the most famous rhetorician, another general there, called Proxenus. And this Proxenus was a very nice man, but he was not very good as a general because he was good in appealing to the good in the nice soldiers and praising them if they acted nobly, but he couldn't do anything about the bad ones. He simply lacked this. Now Xenophon shows by his whole account that he, who was a pupil of Socrates and not of Gorgias the rhetorician, could do both, could handle the good as well as the bad.[iii] The connection with the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is this: Aristotle makes clear there that rhetoric, speeches, won't be sufficient. You must have laws, and, we can say without any error mistaking Aristotle's meaning, laws with teeth in them. The sophists believed in the omnipotence of speech, of persuasive speech, and Socrates did not believe in it. And this simple, commonsensical disagreement of Socrates—because most people would agree with Socrates that speech alone is not sufficient for ruling human beings—is, however, the germ of the classical political philosophy. Forgive me for reading to you my summary of this point in the *City and Man*, page 23:

From this we understand why the nature of political things defeats to some extent, not only reason [this we all know, that rational policy may be defeated—LS] but persuasion in any form and one grasps another reason why the sophistic reduction of the political art to rhetoric is absurd. Xenophon's companion Proxenus had been a pupil of Gorgias, the famous rhetorician. Thanks to Gorgias' instruction he was capable of ruling gentlemen by means of praise or abstention from praise [that is something which we will not touch—LS]. Yet he was utterly incapable of instilling his soldiers with respect and fear of himself; he was unable to discipline them. Xenophon on the other hand, the pupil of Socrates, possessed the full political art [i.e., both persuasion and the other—LS]. The very same thought—the insufficiency of persuasion for the guidance of "the many" and the necessity of laws with teeth in them—constitutes the transition from Aristotle's *Ethics* to his *Politics* [at the end of the *Ethics*—LS]. It is within this context that Aristotle[iv] denounces the sophists' reduction of politics to rhetoric. [And now I draw a conclusion—LS] So far from being "Machiavellians," the sophists—believing in the omnipotence of speech—were blind to the sternness of politics.[v]

LS: This is at least the picture that we get on the basis of these two important reports.

Now this view, that rhetoric as such supplies the solution to the political problem, is used also by Plato himself, for example, in the *Gorgias*, where the true politics is presented as the noble rhetoric, and above all in the *Republic*, where the key question is: How can one persuade the city to accept the rule of the philosophers? Of course the philosophers will

[ii] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 10.9 (1181a–b).
[iii] Xenophon, *Anabasis of Cyrus*, 2.6.16–20 and context.
[iv] In the original: "he."
[v] Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), 23.

have to rule and they [will] have guardians who are heavily armed, but how will the philosophers become accepted in the first place? So this is to be done by rhetoric, and therefore Thrasymachus, this very ambiguous character, plays a very great role in the *Republic*.

But what about the *Protagoras*? Now the *Protagoras*, in contradistinction to its sister dialogue the *Gorgias*, deals with sophistry and not with rhetoric; and this leads up to the suggestion that the true science of human things is the science of measuring pleasures and pains. One could say the felicific calculus,[vi] but it is here of course the pleasures and pains of the individual, not the society at large. The power of the passions, that is the implication, cannot be broken by mere persuasion but only by an exact science: this will do what no persuasion can do. [LS taps on the table for emphasis.] Now whether that is a reasonable proposal or not I think each of us must figure out by himself. Whether people, even if they know exactly the pain with which they will be punished for a present pleasure—whereas now they do not have an exact relation; they cannot say that it is eleven times greater but only considerably greater—whether this exact measurement will have any greater effect than the inexact statement, you must see by yourself.

So in the *Protagoras* everything depends then on the question—the political problem, which is no longer mentioned as such here depends on the possibility of this felicific calculus in the sense defined. Now what about the possibility of such a measuring art? First, do we know that it is possible? This is a question which I address to the class. Do we know that it is possible? Why not? . . . we will investigate it on another occasion. And above all, however, this possibility is tacitly questioned by Socrates, denying that virtue is teachable. If virtue were the figuring out what is the greatest pleasure, this figuring out could be taught, just as you can figure out lengths and as you can find out the exact number of something. But the thesis of the *Protagoras* is truly that this figuring out is not only a condition of virtue but it *is* virtue, otherwise virtue wouldn't be knowledge. And we can safely say this substitution of the felicific calculus for virtue is not meant seriously by Socrates. Yes, and one has to think about this: As ordinary human beings of some experience, as even the youngest of you are, what if you were confronted with the proposition that virtue is identical with the felicific calculus as used here, what would you say? If you have that, you are a good man; if you don't have it you are a bad man.

Student: Virtue would then be a pretty low thing.

LS: Yes, all right, maybe it is a low thing. This would not finish the argument. But what is the obvious flaw of this thought?

Student: . . .

LS: Well, what about—anyone else have anything to say about that?

[vi] The British philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) devised a hedonistic calculus to describe the elements of the value of a pain or a pleasure. The categories of measurement included intensity, duration, certainty, and propinquity. Bentham addressed it in several of his works, perhaps most clearly in his *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789).

Mr. Reinken: Well, I think that Protagoras makes the objection. He doesn't want to swallow the felicific calculus, he thinks he has to hold out for the noble.

LS: Yes, but on the other hand, Protagoras is not a very good witness, because he ain't good at arithmetic or at mathematics—

Student: Yes, but he may be good at knowing—you are asking for a publicly accepted—

LS: Yes, but what is the simple commonsensical objection, if someone would say that?

Student: All virtue would have to include prudence as well as justice which . . .

LS: Oh yes, that is somehow implied, however dubiously. Yes?

Student: There wouldn't be any virtue in the world.

LS: All right. Maybe, as some of these people say, what we ordinarily understand by virtue is just a phantom, a phantasm, and we shouldn't take it seriously.

Student: Well, all right, then how about virtue inculcated by habit?

LS: Yes, but why not state it directly? Yes, you are right, but why not state it directly.

Student: You can't just simply have a slide rule because . . .

LS: All right, that is of course a deeper question regarding the felicific calculus itself, but the question: Assuming that it were possible, could it be virtue? I believe that one can say without hesitation: No, because we know so many people who know that this is harmful to them, whether they know it exactly or inexactly, and yet choose it. In other words, this phenomenon of being overcome by present impressions, be they pleasures or fears, cannot be disposed of by this kind of reasoning.

Now what is the next point? What is the explicit argument of Socrates against Protagoras's claim, which claim implies the rejection of the art of measuring pleasures? Well, perhaps the question is poorly phrased. I'm almost certain it is. Protagoras's claim, originally made, implies the rejection of the art of measurement. He doesn't even think of that; otherwise he couldn't have said virtue is something very different from knowledge. If we turn then to Protagoras's original claim and forget about the art of measurement, what is the explicit argument of Socrates against Protagoras's claim? Here is a man who raises a claim interpreted by Socrates to mean that Protagoras claims to possess and to teach the political art or the political science. How does Socrates show that Protagoras does not possess that art?

Student: He equates the good with the pleasant.

LS: Socrates shows a way how you can make the equation of the good with the pleasant stick to some extent. The whole tradition of hedonism is based on this.

Student: Protagoras doesn't know what virtue is.

LS: Exactly. And therefore he is finished. Or more precisely, perhaps, what is the relation of virtue—which is one, as Protagoras claims—to its parts? But you are quite right. The simpler and clearer statement is: Protagoras does not know what virtue is. How can he teach it? Good.

Now this much I wanted to say in a general way just to loosen the ground a bit, to get the hard and fast into a more liquid condition. Now I would like to give a summary regarding the peculiarity of the *Protagoras* in contrasting it with the Gorgias. And if I omit something in my list I would be very grateful to you if you would remind me of it; perhaps it was implied in what I said, and if not I have to add it. Now the *Gorgias* clearly deals with rhetoric, whereas the *Protagoras* deals with sophists, not sophistry. Sophistry is presented in the *Gorgias* as higher than rhetoric. But the theme of the *Protagoras* is not sophistry. The question of what sophistry is is raised in the conversation with Hippocrates, as you may remember, but it is not answered because Hippocrates cannot answer it. It is not raised in the conversation with Protagoras at all. What Protagoras states about his claim, which Socrates then describes as the political art, is not sophistry. Perhaps it is an offshoot of sophistry. Perhaps; we do not know, but it is surely not sophistry. We do not learn from the *Protagoras* what sophistry is. We see only a symptom, we could say, no more. There is a certain imbalance, then, insofar as the *Gorgias* very clearly discusses rhetoric, whereas the *Protagoras* does not clearly discuss sophistry.

Now the second feature which I observe is that the *Gorgias* is a performed dialogue and the *Protagoras* is a narrated dialogue. Since the *Gorgias* is a performed dialogue, we do not know why Socrates sought the conversation with Gorgias, beyond that Socrates wished to find out from Gorgias what he thought about rhetoric. But why, speaking to Gorgias and so on, is in no way answered, whereas in the narrated dialogue *Protagoras* we know why Socrates sought the conversation with Protagoras. Well, since you have read it as well as I did, why did Socrates seek the conversation with Protagoras?

Mr. Shulsky: Well, he was forced into it in order to dissuade by—well, to show Hippocrates that it was not worth his while to study under Protagoras.

LS: Yes, and we can say with a slight exaggeration that Socrates tried to protect Hippocrates against corruption. Good.

The third item, which is already implied to some extent in the second, is that the *Protagoras* is a compulsory dialogue. Socrates is compelled by Hippocrates. And the *Gorgias* is very clearly, as you would see when reading the first page, a voluntary dialogue. Socrates is eager, spontaneously eager to talk to Gorgias.

The fourth item: whereas in the *Protagoras* the discussions take place chiefly with the hero (if we call hero the man mentioned in the title), in the *Gorgias* there is very little discussion with the hero, Gorgias. Now if we try to understand that, first in the case of the *Gorgias*, we would see by studying the *Gorgias* that Socrates, who doesn't think highly of Gorgias's rhetoric, silently suggests to this top rhetorician the highest purpose which his rhetoric could serve. [1][Rhetoric] would have to be, in order to be truly respectable, ministerial to virtue, which for Gorgias it is not. But virtue is identical with philosophy, so it must be ministerial to philosophy. The discussion in the *Gorgias* takes place for the sake of Gorgias. *He* is to learn. There are quite a few passages in the latter half of the dialogue, especially in the Callicles section, when Callicles refuses to go on, and Gorgias insists: *I* want to hear it, and similar remarks . . . In the *Protagoras* on the other hand, Socrates openly suggests to Protagoras the true kind of sophistry, namely, what is called the felicific calculus. You remember, this is the way you have to argue in order to convince people that sophistry is good. He leaves it, however, doubtful whether this kind of knowledge or science is possible. The discussion in the *Protagoras* takes place for the sake of Hippocrates, not for Protagoras or any other sophist. And with this is connected the sixth difference. In the *Protagoras*, the discussion is not completed. It is clear at the end that they do not yet know the key point, whereas in the *Gorgias* the discussion is completed. The myth is in the case of the *Gorgias* a clear sign that the discussion is completed.

Now number seven. In the *Gorgias*, the discussion of rhetoric, the subject matter, is linked up with the question of Socrates's fate and his whole way of life. No such link-up exists in the *Protagoras*. Since the *Gorgias* deals with the question of Socrates's fate, his way of life, the question of the right way of life becomes the theme. And this is the eighth point: Socrates is presented as a defender of justice, moderation, philosophy. In the *Protagoras*, however, Socrates is not presented and does not present himself as the defender of justice and moderation. And connected with this is this point, which is so crucial: in the *Protagoras*, he argues on the premise that the good is identical with the pleasant, which as we know leads to the art of measurement, but natural science . . . is of course dropped. This is of note. Entirely different is the situation in the *Gorgias*. The discussion in the *Gorgias* is based on the premise that the good differs from the pleasant; and this is connected with a sketch of mathematical cosmology, as the historians would say, reminding of Pythagorean things and foreshadowing Plato's own *Timaeus*. In the *Gorgias*, the need for a *technē*, a science or art, is traced to the necessity of distinguishing between the good and the pleasant. In the *Gorgias*, the premise is that the good differs from the pleasant, and there is no art regarding the pleasant, which is a certain difficulty: why should there not be an art of cookery? This is at least a legitimate objection to what Socrates has said. According to the *Gorgias* we need an art in order to distinguish between the good and the pleasant, and the good is not pleasant; whereas the need for an art is traced in the *Protagoras* to the necessity of distinguishing between two kinds of pleasures, the preferable pleasures from those that we reject.

I come now to the next. Everyone reading the *Protagoras*, the beginning especially, must be struck by the fact that Socrates and Hippocrates have such difficulties in getting into Callias's house, where the sophists are assembled. We shall say then, to generalize, the

sophists are difficult of access. And this difficulty is due to what? This difficulty of getting access to Protagoras and the others is due to what?

Student: Well, the fact that sophistry is a dangerous profession.

LS: Yes, but more immediately?

Student: Callias is a rich man.

LS: No, that is—

Mr. Reinken: The sophists stay in, and the slaves despise them.

LS: No, the eunuch. They can't get in because of the eunuch, but the eunuch is an enemy of the sophists. So the difficulty of access to the sophists is due to the enemies of the sophists, not to the sophists themselves. I mean we have no trace of that. Yes?

Student: Couldn't that be linked up with their caution?

LS: Yes. I come to that, but we have to proceed step by step. Incidentally, what about Socrates? Is access to Socrates difficult or easy?

Student: Easy.

LS: Very easy, in Plato's Socrates. [LS chuckles] What about the *Clouds*? Does any one of you remember the *Clouds*? Yes?

Student: It is very hard . . .

LS: Yes, yes. The comical expression of the difference between Aristophanes's Socrates and Plato's or Xenophon's Socrates is this: that Aristophanes's Socrates, like a sophist, is difficult of access, and the Platonic–Xenophonic Socrates is easy of access. Yes, indeed. Now what about the *Gorgias*? Yes.

Student: It occurred to me that in the *Protagoras,* when the eunuch who meets them at the door, he won't let them in because Callias resists, not that the sophists resist, because what he says about Protagoras—

LS: Yes, but after all, he can't say: I can't let you in because I don't like you. After all, he is an employee; he has to give a reason reflecting the master's opinion. But why does he say it? Because he regards them as sophists.

Student: Yes, but I was answering the question of the difficulty of access to the sophists. When he asks to see Protagoras rather than Callias, the eunuch lets them in.

LS: Yes, but not without some grumbling. That is very clear. In the *Gorgias*, however, there is no difficulty of access whatever. Socrates is welcomed by Callicles to this meeting with Gorgias.

Now point number ten, which is in a way connected with what we saw in the last point. In the *Protagoras*, the hero claims to be frank. In the *Gorgias*, the hero does not raise this claim. He may be frank; people who don't raise the claim to be frank are more likely to be frank than the others. And I have known people who, when you ask them for the time of the day, they might say: Frankly, I do not know. And I have seen some of these people who are very unfrank and were very prodigal with the expression "frank." That doesn't mean anything. But at any rate, the underlying fact is that Protagoras claims to be frank and Gorgias does not raise this claim.

And now the point which I will make as the last, eleven: Protagoras raises the exorbitant claim, exorbitant in the light of the end of the dialogue, to be a teacher of virtue. Provided you have the money and can pay for the instruction, you will become better every day you are with him. Gorgias does not raise this claim. We have here not only the silence of Gorgias in the dialogue *Gorgias*, but in the *Meno* there is a pupil or rather an adherent of Gorgias who says, in 95b to c, when Socrates asks Meno, "Shall we say that the sophists are teachers of virtue?" And Meno says: "No."

Mr. Reinken:
Meno: No, no, Socrates, I assure you. Sometimes you may hear them refer to it as teachable, but sometimes as not.
Soc.: Then, are we to call those persons teachers of this thing, when they do not agree on that great question?
Meno: I should say not, Socrates.
Soc.: Well, and what of the sophists? Do you consider these, its only professors, to be teachers of virtue?
Meno: That is a point, Socrates, for which I admire Gorgias: you will never—

LS: Yes, "to a high degree," or "particularly."

Mr. Reinken:
particularly admire Gorgias. You will never hear him promising this, and he ridicules the others when he hears them promise it. Skill in speaking is what he takes it to be their business to produce. (*Meno* 95b-c)[vii]

LS: That's all. So Gorgias has nothing to do with that exorbitant claim. He is a much more sensible man; he teaches rhetoric. Yes?
Mr. Shulsky: Well, in the *Gorgias* he is led into that claim by Socrates, isn't he? And that's what brings about his downfall.

[vii] Mr. Reinken reads from *Meno*, trans. W.R.M. Lamb, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924).

LS: Not quite. No, that is rather tricky. Socrates asks him: Do you also teach justice? He says: No, that is not rhetoric. And Socrates says: Look, but if he is a crook and then you give him this great weapon of rhetoric, then you will be held responsible for the terrible things he does with the art he learned from you. And Gorgias doesn't like that, and thereupon Gorgias says: Well, they all come to me and know what justice is. But if they should not happen to know it, in other words, if they are completely ill-bred dropouts, then I will tell them of the just things. That's all. But he does not claim to make them any better.

Now by raising this exorbitant claim—and it is exorbitant, because he says: I am much better than any Athenian; to be together [or] to spend your time with Pericles or with other elder statesmen is much less useful to you for possessing virtue, which includes of course political excellence, than to be together with a stranger from southern Italy, or Sicily. Protagoras sticks his neck out by the fact of his claim, and therefore the problem of concealment arises. Since it is dangerous, should he conceal his pursuit, or should he not conceal it? The problem of concealment does not arise for Gorgias, as we see from the silence of the *Gorgias* on this subject. And we have seen that Protagoras says, in contradistinction to all earlier sophists, [that] he is the first to frankly admit to being a sophist. And this frankness is a great thing. And this is in a way the most obvious difference between Socrates and Protagoras, that Socrates takes the side of the concealers. In other words, Protagoras has his intellectual ancestry: he gives the long list. Socrates gives the list of his intellectual ancestry in the Simonides section. In spite of their opposition—Socrates's ancestry is laconic and the other is non-laconic, because no one could say that Homer is laconic, for example—both the laconic and the non-laconic men are concealers. And Socrates agrees with *both* against this newfangled heretic, Protagoras, who says concealment is unnecessary. And this means, however, in the immediate context of the *Protagoras* (not in other contexts), that Socrates conceals his way of life, he conceals philosophy (that doesn't come up as such) and especially he conceals the opposition of the two ways of life, of the philosophic and nonphilosophic, which is a key theme of the *Gorgias*.

So this grand development of Socrates's way of life and its premises and consequences, this is wholly absent from the *Protagoras*. He conceals, but at the same time he conceals the concealing by an extraordinary act at the beginning. He tells this absolutely private affair which has taken place in the house of Callias, he tells to the first comer who asks him: Would you like to hear the story? [2][He] says: Please! He [Socrates] asks a leading question to him. You find no parallel to that in any other dialogue. And of course also he publishes even what one may call with a gross exaggeration the bedroom scene, when Hippocrates comes and he tells it . . . Good. But the question which we should raise is this: Since this concealment issue is, I believe, in no dialogue so patent as in the *Protagoras*, is Protagoras truly frank, as he claims to be? We have some evidence, perhaps not for settling the question but surely for articulating it. Yes?

Mr. Shulsky: Well, first of all, in his first speech about the political art, which he claims to teach, and he would appear not to be frank because he doesn't talk about those things

which would give someone prominence in the city; he just talks about justice, moderation and piety. And that clearly is not the main body of his teaching . . . right there.

LS: That is true. He is almost silent about his own art, which he employs in the case of his paying students. That is quite true, yes. But he speaks explicitly, even while raising the claim of frankness, of the precautionary measures he has taken at the same time. In other words, his frankness is a measure of precaution, and therefore the primary consideration is not frankness but caution. Now caution may also require some other means apart from caution. And furthermore, the initial scene—I believe I did not bring this out sufficiently—when Socrates and Hippocrates enter the building, when they enter the house and then they find three groups—Protagoras's group, Hippias's group, and Prodicus's group: now the only group where Socrates found out what they talked about was in the case of the Hippias group, which was precipitated by the fact that they had the mathematical instruments; but still, he heard what they said. In the case of Prodicus it is explicitly said they couldn't hear it because of the bad acoustics. But in the case of the Protagoras group, it is not explicitly said but suggested by the silence about it that Socrates did not hear what Protagoras was telling to his group. Surely Protagoras admits to being a sophist: this is his frankness. He does not say that he has no secret teaching whatsoever. And we can even prove that he did not mean that, by a very striking occurrence. How does he begin his exposition?

Student: By the myth.

LS: With a myth. And the myth is not meant to be, of course, literally true. We have to translate it. And it is in this case very easy to translate it into non-mythical language. Yes. And the other adaptations to the Athenian democracy he makes after having been warned by Socrates of the danger.

So these were the main points I wanted to make, and I would like to add only one thing, rather with reference to future readings by yourself, or perhaps with me or whatever may be the case. These two sister dialogues, the *Protagoras* and the *Gorgias*, converge, we can say, toward another dialogue. And this I've known about for only a few days because I hadn't looked at the dialogue in question for a very long time, and that is the dialogue *Meno*. It is connected with the *Gorgias* by the very obvious fact that Meno is an adherent of Gorgias, and Gorgias is referred to, and with the *Protagoras* in a way more visibly by the fact because this question—Is virtue knowledge, and therefore is virtue teachable?—the question which arose at the end of the *Protagoras*, is the theme of the *Meno*.

I am not interested in the question in which sequence Plato has written the dialogues, which was the chief concern of classical scholarship in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and to some extent even now. I believe that is unimportant, because even if we knew by divine revelation when they were written, we cannot exclude by this that Plato might have conceived of them much earlier. I mean, Plato could have conceived of the *Laws*, probably his latest work, at the time he wrote the *Republic* and simply said: I am going to write this other book, the second book, the *Laws* . . . when I am an old man, when I have in every way the qualities required for speaking about law . . . I see no

difficulty in that. And the same applies to all other considerations. If you have the journal of a writer, the diary of a writer, in which he tells you: "Today this occurred to me for the first time, [a] big day"—as we know in other cases . . . Nietzsche; we know of Kant such great changes in his thought and can date them—but we have no diaries of this kind, we have only the dialogues. And we have a lot of gossip, especially from later times, which is always interesting to hear because it has at least the advantage of not being the brainchild of modern scholars, but of course this is not sufficient because there were many stupid people in classical antiquity. [Laughter] So I think we have to try to understand the inner connection of the dialogues, regardless of any question of the time when they were written.

When we looked at the beginning of the *Protagoras*, Socrates narrating the dialogue to someone named, in a way—his proper name wasn't given, but he appears as a character called "the comrade." Socrates names him *hetairos*. In the *Republic*, for example, Socrates also narrates, but we don't know to whom. It is a fair guess that the people to whom he narrates it are the ones at the beginning of the *Timaeus*—Timaeus, Critias, and Hermocrates—but that doesn't appear from the title page of the *Republic*. But here we see the addressee, although nameless but in a way identified: a nameless comrade. Now this feature of the *Protagoras* links it up most directly with only one other Platonic dialogue, and that is the *Euthydemus*, where Socrates narrates a conversation, and this time to a named comrade, namely, Crito, the hero of the dialogue *Crito*. You would see immediately by reading the *Euthydemus* that the subject is very closely akin to that of the *Protagoras*, only much more obviously bantering, not to say frivolous. But still the question of sophistry is on a much lower level, because Euthydemus and his brother, who are the heroes of this dialogue, are just clowns, whereas Protagoras cannot be called a clown under any condition.

There is another dialogue with which the *Protagoras* is obviously linked, and I mention this because this reflection occurred regarding every Platonic dialogue. You know there are, say, thirty-five dialogues and then not every dialogue is linked to every other. There are families, so to speak. But this doesn't exclude that one member could not be wedded—[viii] but we have to pay our debts, as it were, and move accordingly into that. I hope I do not have to state again that by engaging in this kind of study of Plato's work we are just doing merely historical studies about some man dead millennia ago, and we should rather be concerned with a variety of issues, say, what is going on in Vietnam and Santo Domingo.[ix] But I have a hunch that our thinking about Santo Domingo and Vietnam will be improved if we take this roundabout way of thinking about the matter.

Now there is another dialogue to which we are pointed by the *Protagoras*, less visibly but nonetheless plausibly. I noted the fact that some of the pupils of the sophists mentioned by Socrates—you remember when he comes in and sees these and these with Protagoras, these and these with Hippias, and these and these with Prodicus—some of these pupils of

[viii] The tape was changed at this point.

[ix] In April 1965, President Lyndon Johnson sent American troops into Santo Domingo, capital of the Dominican Republic, to quell civil unrest there and prevent what the president called a communist dictatorship from holding power.

the sophists reappear as speaking characters (in the *Protagoras* they don't speak) in one of the most magnificent Platonic works: in the *Symposium*, or the *Banquet*. And this is to begin with very hard to understand. What does the *Protagoras* have to do with the *Symposium*? Now the *Banquet* culminates in a speech by Socrates. It is not a dialogue in the ordinary sense, because we have rather a sequence of speeches, subsequent speeches. The last speech is that by Socrates—well, in one sense it isn't, because after Socrates is through, a drunken man crashes the party, if this is the proper expression, and makes a speech on Socrates. That is Alcibiades. But Alcibiades speaks about Socrates, whereas the speeches all dealt with the same theme: *eros*, love. Now in the *Banquet* Socrates tells to the friends there, he reveals to them a secret which had been revealed to him by that extraordinary woman, Diotima. Incidentally, there is another more obvious connection between the [two] dialogues. At the beginning or near the beginning of the *Protagoras*: Socrates standing in the vestibule before the house in silent meditation. The same happens at the beginning of the *Banquet* and nowhere else. Plato could not have made clearer the connection. Now it is of course possible from what we have said so far that these speeches about *eros* prior to Socrates's speech are in a way sophistic speeches, speeches not in the ordinary sense of the word, based on illegitimate inferences, but on the cosmology to which the sophists adhere. That is possible. But the fact that Plato almost crosses the t's and dots the i's in order to draw our attention to the relation between the *Protagoras* and the *Banquet* forces us to take this quite seriously. Now this is the end of what I shall say coherently, and we have some time left for friendly or unfriendly exchange.

Mr. Reinken: A minor point. Between four and six I don't see where to put the number five in. . . .

LS: Well, order is not very good, but I will gladly tell you that you see the amount of my disorderliness. I will tell you. Number five is—

Mr. Reinken: Is it that you distinguish the point of—in *Protagoras* the discussion is chiefly with the type of role, and then the question of for the sake of whom it is?

LS: Yes, this is number five. Socrates silently suggests to Gorgias the highest purpose of rhetoric; Socrates openly suggests to Protagoras the true kind of sophistry. Yes?

Student: Will you repeat the exam question?

LS: The exam question. I am glad there is one man here of common sense [laughter] bringing us back. Well, there is no exam question, there is no question: Socrates's critique of Protagoras's political science or political art, whatever you call it. Yes?

Student: It seemed to me, and this may be a completely wrong impression, but that the dangers from Protagoras didn't become clear or wouldn't have become clear to Hippocrates except that, well, he didn't know what virtue is. That is a fact and there could be very considerable damages. . . .

LS: All right, very good. In other words, Protagoras was not shown up as a corruptor of the young in a way which Hippocrates could understand. That is quite true. But still something happened which was bound to affect Hippocrates's eagerness to become a pupil of Protagoras. Yes? And what was that?

Student: Well, I would say that he got beaten.

LS: Yes, yes. Yes, good. Now why is this better? Why is this better than debunking, than simply showing up Protagoras as a corruptor of the youth? Why is this better? Because I make one assumption: Socrates is a wise man and will choose a wise course of action. Why is it better to deflate Protagoras than to present him as a corruptor of the young? This kind of question we are concerned [with] today all the time, whether we know it or not. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: Because then he's appealing to Hippocrates's courage and manliness rather than to his possibly very narrow moderation and temperance, which would be necessary to keep him away from corrupters.

LS: Yes, that is true, but it is a bit complicated. Yes?

Student: Well, to show him up as a corruptor, you would have to let him explain his whole course of teaching . . .

LS: Well, Protagoras would be too clever. He would then find a way out of that.

Student: Hippocrates shows at the beginning of the discussion with Socrates that he is aware that there is something shameful about being a sophist by blushing. But that doesn't disturb him in order to really deter him from . . .

LS: But he does not learn, as Mr. Bruell pointed out—I mean, assuming that Hippocrates is not very intelligent, and I think that is a fair assumption, he doesn't notice that Protagoras is a corruptor. Protagoras contradicts himself and he is reduced to silence, and Socrates is the winner in all these contests. That everyone can see, and Hippocrates also can see; and since hitherto he regarded [Protagoras][x] as wisdom incarnate, where one must spend lots of money to be a pupil of his, he sees that Protagoras is not so hot: I can have it cheaper when I go to Socrates . . . [Laughter]

Student: . . . First off, if you make an attack on a person's character as opposed to simply showing him . . . wrong, especially in a place where he is surrounded by friends, it's too easy for him to simply say he is an immoderate man and why should you listen to him? The second thing is that [3]the same sort of attack is [however] even worse when you have the majority and you are surrounded by friends and a man who is called a corruptor of youth is held out alone, lacking authority the defense can not be made in the same way . . .

[x] Strauss says "Hippocrates," evidently a misstatement.

LS: Yes, but have you ever heard the word "character assassination"? And such an accusation of Socrates would simply be: Protagoras, you are a wicked man ruining these people. This would be most improper conduct, because after all Protagoras behaved with ordinary courtesy, and you cannot do that. Now a certain urbanity was taken for granted in Athens, and Socrates acts always . . .

Student: Well, people in general, and young men of Hippocrates's type in particular, are attracted to what appears to be dangerous and corrupting, whereas they're not very much attracted at all to a fool. If Protagoras can be shown [4]to have lost a verbal battle, he will lose much of his attractiveness.

LS: Yes, sure.

Same Student: For Socrates to say that it is dangerous for Hippocrates to study with Protagoras will increase the attraction to a certain extent.

LS: He said that.

Same Student: Yes, and Hippocrates was not at all impressed.

LS: No, no.

Same Student: And to show it would not impress Hippocrates nearly as much as simply to show that Protagoras is not that wonderful.

LS: Yes. What I simply called to deflate him or debunk him. Mr. . . . ?

Student: Socrates too is accused of corrupting the youth, and Socrates is a philosopher, but because the people who have to judge these things obviously can't judge between a philosopher and a sophist . . . But what Socrates has to do is to defend the people who allow him to live the seventy years against those dangerous doctrines which remove philosophers from Athens in such a way so as to still keep himself free to philosophize . . .

LS: I think that is a point from which I would start. I would say that it would do greater harm to Hippocrates to become just a hater of sophists than to be induced in a particular case not to become a pupil of sophists, because he would not have discrimination enough to distinguish between a sophist and a philosopher. And the fact that he adheres to Socrates is never explained. But I suppose Socrates was somehow known to his family and, you know, a fellow whom you can trust, an easygoing man and you just step in whenever you like and who never takes anything ill.

Student: Does Socrates go to visit Protagoras with the assumption that he is unwise, or is that something he finds out at the party?

LS: No. I mean, he had seen him before and he knew who Protagoras was, that I would take for granted. But if we disregard his moral motive, the desire to help Hippocrates—if we disregard that entirely, I think it has a somewhat whimsical motive: to see how Protagoras will act in such a situation. Because he probably had never seen it before. Yes?

Student: Am I to understand you to say that those dialogues are related together, related to one another in groups?

LS: Yes, but I say dialogue A belongs to group alpha. It may also belong to a group beta. Is this not very simple to understand?

Student: They are really connected.

LS: Yes, they are connected. Plato's dialogues as a whole are an imitation of the world, of the cosmos. Now not everything in the world is directly connected with everything else, but an indirect connection always exists. That makes sense. Yes.

Student: Well, I didn't understand why you said before that it would be better for Hippocrates to become a possible pupil of the sophists than become a mere hater of the sophists. I see that it would be better for Socrates as a philosopher. But it would seem that Hippocrates's character—he could be a man of very fine character and still hate the sophists and philosophers. I mean, wouldn't he be better off hating sophists?

LS: Yes, but would he not be better off if he would become a pupil of Protagoras, is that what you mean?

Same Student: No. I mean, I say that—you suggested that it would be better that he be a pupil of Protagoras than a mere hater of sophists.

LS: No, I did not. He should not be a pupil of Protagoras, but he also should not be a hater of sophists as sophists, because he could not distinguish. In this particular case, thanks to the presence of Socrates in Athens, it was possible to deflate this particular charlatan. Yes? But there are not always Socrateses around and, as I know from my youth and some of you may not yet know it because you are too young, it takes some time until you can distinguish between charlatans and non-charlatans. I mean, there are gross cases where men are so patently charlatans that even a student of eighteen or nineteen would not be fooled, but in other cases, most definitely.

Same Student: Well, suppose there were some people, there were many people in Athens who just don't have the ability, they will never be able to discriminate between the sophists and the philosophers.

LS: Yes, but therefore they had a very simple weapon against that, like the eunuch: Sophists be damned! And then unable to distinguish between the sophists and Socrates. And the eunuch even thought that poor Hippocrates is a sophist, you remember?

Same Student: Well, that would be better . . .

LS: Yes, this is a certain protection, but it is also of course a danger. These organizations which preserve the established can also get out of hand; they need an injection of wisdom. I believe you are familiar with parallels from the American present. There is some reason, some discernment, some discretion which is necessary, and Socrates was a conservative man, but he was conservative in a broader way: keep the old practice and the old orders, but in such a way that freedom of thought, of thinking, is possible, at least for those who will make good use of it. But a legislator, poor fellow, cannot make this distinction between those who would make a good use and those who would make a bad use. You cannot have simply a law, because a law would be unable to distinguish. How would you distinguish by a legal provision between a philosopher and sophist? Because if you do, the sophists will appear as philosophers. Very simple, yes? Clever people can evade laws, and especially laws of that kind. There is no legal possibility of drawing the distinction. Thoughtful and honest men can make the distinction properly and will make it, but where is the guarantee that the judges or the magistrates will always be thoughtful and honest men? There is no guarantee. There are some institutional safeguards. Some lines can be drawn somewhere, that is true; for example, there is no obvious consequence from the need for freedom of thought that there must be perfect freedom for obscenity, as some Berkeley students seem to have thought.[xi] This I believe to be an illegitimate conclusion, because there is no thought involved in that. [Laughter] [5]But we have to muddle through that, but this muddling through may be, in the case of men of judgment, not muddling through at all but clear judgment in this case, different from a clear judgment in another case. That is possible.

Student: Is not Protagoras clearly trying to say in effect too that teaching should carry with it a moral significance? A moral significance. He seems to be introducing a moral element into teaching here too.

LS: Protagoras doesn't say that.

Same Student: He doesn't say it, no, but he says he teaches virtue.

LS: But what does virtue mean? Perhaps it means not more than cleverness and courage, i.e., nerve, combined. That is not exactly what we ordinarily put the emphasis on and which is not what we ordinarily understand by decency, because Mr. Giancana, I'm sure, has these qualities to an above average degree, but that wouldn't be the point. Protagoras

[xi] Strauss probably alludes to the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, which began in September 1964. University students had provided information on campus about and soliciting donations for their activities in support of the Civil Rights Movement in the Bay Area and more broadly. The university administration announced in September 1964 that existing university regulations banning political activity on campus would be strictly enforced. Students perceived the ban as a threat to their rights to free speech and to academic freedom. Negotiations to end the ban were unsuccessful, leading to mass protests. The university administration lifted the ban in part by early 1965.

is in an ordinary sense of the term a decent man: he didn't steal silver spoons and, as we have seen from the beautiful address he made at the end of the speech to Socrates, he is not envious, not petty, and speaks very finely about how promising this young man is—relatively young man, Socrates. He is truly a nice man. I mean, we must never make the mistake which is easy to make, that we identify ourselves simply [LS laughs] with the good characters. We must also make an application to ourselves and raise the question: Are we such? Am I such a good guy? Of course it goes without saying that is the most important application. But still, since knowledge or awareness is an important ingredient of decency, to learn the right standards is important for acting rightly, although it is not the same. That is a great error apparently committed by Socrates, who thinks: If I know the right thing, I will do it. And the vulgar always say that isn't true, and the vulgar are right in this respect. That is a problem. Yes?

Student: Would you speculate on the agreement between Socrates and Hippocrates before they go into Callias's home?

LS: What do you mean?

Same Student: They stand outside and they discuss. And he speaks of an agreement . . .

LS: An agreement does not necessarily mean an agreement regarding action. No, agreement has here this wide meaning: they reached an agreement; some difficulty came up.

Same Student: Why is this placed in the dialogue?

LS: Well, I remember I had some thoughts [about that]. It is of course very striking that Socrates does not report this part of the conversation. Where is it? Let us see.

Same Student: About 314c.

LS: Yes, that is correct. Yes, about some *logos*: "They conversed about some *logos* which had occurred to them on the way. Lest this be incomplete, we completed it and then we went in. And standing in the forehall we argued until we had agreed with each other."[xii] Ya? Still, of course Plato makes us very curious. What was it? Socrates tells everything, every detail and just not this little tiny thing. I do not know, and if you don't mind this disgraceful procedure, I will simply look up whether something had occurred to me when I read that.[xiii] I said here that this *logos* between Socrates and Hippocrates was undisclosed and would surely prove that not every *logos* is disclosed. They completed that *logos* while standing, not walking, and this we discussed at the time, and I said this contrasts with the uncompleted conversation with Protagoras which follows. Ya? That is obviously incomplete, because they don't know what virtue is. But here—yes, I did not dare to make any guess at what the discussion was, but perhaps one can do it by a more careful reading of the conversation with Hippocrates than we have done. Yes. But it is

[xii] Strauss's translation.
[xiii] There is the sound of pages turning as Strauss looks through his notes.

not wise to concentrate one's attention on this particularly hard nut and not concentrate first on the things which one can understand. Otherwise one would waste much too much time. Yes?

Student: What is the danger of Protagoras's speaking? Socrates had to protect the already . . . Hippocrates. What was the danger of that? Just because he didn't know what virtue means . . .

LS: Excuse me. Hippocrates did not yet receive instruction from Protagoras. This is just when a boy comes to school and sees the president or the dean or some secretaries or whatever it is . . or you can also say the public relations man. No instruction is given. How do you know that Protagoras in his . . . instruction wouldn't say, laws are bunk—you have to comply externally with them but . . . How do you know?

Student: Well, if he doesn't know, then you have to wonder why Socrates went along with Hippocrates.

LS: Since you do not know, since Hippocrates doesn't know, Socrates is absolutely justified in telling him, "Don't take chances," because teachings are not things like food, fish, or whatever it is which you buy in the marketplace and you have them in a vessel [and] you don't eat them until afterwards. But the teaching you cannot wrap up and take it home, and then I will wash it and so, but you take it in immediately and the damage which it has caused is there. Socrates makes this clear at great length. You remember that?

Student: I remember that, but I—in other words, in this dialogue we are never told what the danger of sophistry is as sophistry . . .

LS: I think a closer study would show and has shown it. Why is Protagoras so much embarrassed by the proposition that you cannot be prudent without being just? Why is he embarrassed by that? Because he believes that you can very well be shrewd and very successful in the world without being just. And if you believe that and you deal with such matters in your classroom, so to speak—we are not in Protagoras's classroom, mind you; we are, as it were, before he registered for Protagoras's courses and here we are still in the Madison Avenue stage, not in the classroom. Yes?

Student: I got the impression that Hippocrates has political ambition—

LS: Yes, how seriously they are to be taken we do not know. He is very young. But since there are all kinds of politicians, even taking ordinary politicians' standards, why he might be a quite good run-of-the-mill politician, for all we know. Sure, he has political ambitions. Yes.

Student: . . . this, I believe, was raised earlier in the quarter, and you said he was referring to a different dialogue, Hippocrates will now leave Protagoras apparently with those same ambitions that he has and hopefully pick up the art of rhetoric someplace else

so that he can gain the power that he might desire. However, what are Socrates's plans to combat this? Does he hope to get Hippocrates to come to him, or does he—

LS: Perhaps, but that is hard to say. The initiative is entirely with Hippocrates and there is no sign that Socrates takes an eager positive interest in Hippocrates. He has the decent negative interest. If you see a man about to fall into a ditch with poisonous fumes, you will warn him. And that is what Socrates does.

Same Student: But what about Hippocrates? If Hippocrates is just going to be left drifting with all the perhaps corrupt politicians of Athens at the time, wouldn't he be better off . . .

LS: Yes, that is a point. But the question is this: if he has acquired in addition powerful tools as he might acquire through learning rhetoric, he would be worse. That is quite true. That is particularly clear in the *Meno*, but also in other dialogues. Socrates disagrees with the sophists, and in that respect he agrees with the majority of the citizens, but on different grounds. In the case of the majority of the citizens, at best—at best—[it is] a kind of healthy instinct. But they don't know. In the *Meno* the accuser of Socrates, Anytus, says he hates the sophists, but when Socrates asks him, "Did you ever see one?" [Anytus says:] "No! I don't want to see them, I want to know nothing about them! I just hate them!" Now this is perhaps a good protection up to a certain point, but it has also its weak side, you know? You must know your enemy and you cannot simply leave it at hating and killing him. Yes?

Mr. Shulsky: According to the scheme of the *Gorgias*, sophistry is the sham legislative art and rhetoric is the sham art of justice. From this last comment, it would seem that one thing that has been forgotten about in the *Protagoras* is in fact the legislative art. I mean, in the very beginning they talked in terms of buying food for the body, [and] you would need a doctor or a trainer. And then when they talked about food for the soul they just mentioned the doctor of the soul, no trainer of the soul, at the very beginning there, when discussing the body. And throughout there has been no discussion of the legislative art as such, and we see that Socrates does not try to become a trainer of the soul of Hippocrates, he just sort of becomes a doctor, you know, by saving him from this disease.

LS: You could even say the health of Hippocrates.

Mr. Shulsky: So why would it be, then, that in the discussion of sophistry—the companion to the *Gorgias* covers sophistry . . .

LS: But that doesn't do. In the *Gorgias*, Socrates proposes to the master rhetorician what the true rhetoric [would be]. In the *Protagoras*, he does not suggest to the master sophist what a true sophistry would be. That is a fact. I mean, we can't look for that in the *Protagoras*. You would have to turn—there is a Platonic dialogue called *Sophist*, and in that you would probably find an answer. But I don't think that the other dialogues directly relate to sophistry . . . you have to leave it at that, and the ideal task of understanding the dialogue is to discover that fundamental premise or purpose of the

individual dialogue from which all other teachings of the dialogue flow with perfect clarity and necessity. And I believe that the question of the concealment problem is broadest from this point of view. You arrive at the largest number of features, which I have enumerated, by starting from that. In other words, the sham enlightenment, to use the modern term, for which Protagoras stands: it is sham enlightenment not only because the doctrine which it spreads is not true and sound, but also because it lacks that frankness which it claims. Mr. Dry? That will be the last question.

Mr. Dry: . . . refers to Aristotle's judgment on sophists that they reduce the political art to rhetoric. I would like to know what significance there is on this question in Protagoras's treatment in the myth, where he reduces or defines the gift of Zeus, or of what we think of as political virtue, to punishment. Because there, there I got the impression that there is an example, there is a spot where there is the recognition of the need for pressure, for coercion. It may not be—

LS: Quite true. Very good point. I do not know how I can answer that so easily. Let me see. What struck me most in the myth in various readings of it is this: that what he wanted to make clear is the difference between nature, i.e., what the subterraneous gods, working without light, including Epimetheus—the arts, that which Prometheus stole from heaven; and what we call morals, morality, and what for Protagoras would be merely convention. Now if we disregard the mythical language of the gift of Zeus, it means simply ordinary decency is a product of social pressure: punishment in the wider sense, where it does not mean merely going to jail and being executed and paying fines, but also disgrace is of course also a punishment. In other words, it has no *truth* in it. That is the point, whereas the arts all have truth in them. The untruth is proven by the fact that in the case of this kind of vice or vicious actions, nothing bad happens to the doer unless he is detected. And this shows the artificial character, whereas if you overeat . . . you may be in the strictest privacy, you will be punished for it. If you don't know that, ask anyone whoever ate or drank too much. And this takes place wholly independent of detection. And this notion is: any bad action which is punished only when detected is not intrinsically bad. An intrinsically bad action is one which punishes itself. Well, Xenophon alludes occasionally to this strange thing from a different point of view than a Socratic point of view, roughly this: that the penal laws as ordinarily framed, at least in olden time, are untrue assertions. It says, He who does this will be punished in this way. Well, in order to make it true you would have to add: if detected. Now to make a penal law true in this sense means of course to hold it up for ridicule, so as it were to encourage people to prevent their detection. Now then we must—but what could one say in reply to your very good point? Does Protagoras reduce the political art to rhetoric? Does he do that? You are quite right in theory, in the myth and also non-mythically later, [he] contradicts that. But do we have any other evidence that he did that, Protagoras, [somewhere in the dialogue]?

Mr. Dry: Then I think we might want to distinguish his political art from that . . . gift of Zeus, which he doesn't talk about that. It's not there, but we know it's not there because he skips over it; it is something different . . . when he talks about education. . . .

LS: Yes, but is not his whole doctrine based on the premise that virtue is not knowledge? Surely, that's clear. And therefore it should not be teachable, as Socrates says. Now of course he says it is teachable, but what does he understand by "teachable"? If the social pressure apparatus is a form of teaching, as a very broad and lax use of the word "teaching"—in other words, you are right. We have to reconsider with all due respect, Aristotle's statement about sophistry, reducing it (or *almost* reducing it the statement must be qualified) to rhetoric. And perhaps we must say Protagoras, as presented in Plato's [*Protagoras*][xiv] doesn't fall under this heading. [LS taps on the table] That may very well be. I cannot do more.

I don't say "I wish you a nice vacation" as I ordinarily say at the end of classes, because you still have to undergo that humiliation, the examination.

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[1] Deleted "It"; moved "rhetoric."
[2] Deleted "Socrates."
[3] Moved "however."
[4] Deleted "to be."
[5] Deleted "and we have others."

[xiv] Strauss says "*Republic*," evidently in error.